TOWARD THE HEIGHTS OF UNION WITH GOD

BY

Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P., and Mother Mary Magdalen, C.P.

translated and edited

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INTRODUCTION

In Christian hagiography we frequently meet saintly persons who have mutually assisted each other along the path to sanctity. Drawn to each other by reason of their mutual fraternal charity and their common desire to attain the perfection of the love of God, they shared the secrets of their interior life and encouraged and counseled each other to such an extent that their spiritual friendship became a powerfully sanctifying influence in their quest for Christian perfection. As examples, we need only recall St. Augustine and St. Ambrose, St. Benedict and St. Scholastica, St. Francis and St. Clare, Blessed Jordan and Blessed Diana, St. Catherine of Siena and Blessed Raymond, St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane Frances de Chantal, and a host of others.

This volume contains the spiritual correspondence between the Dominican, Father John G. Arintero, and the cloistered Passionist nun, Mother Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist. They became acquainted almost by accident, but from the first moment of their acquaintance, they were both aware of the spiritual possibilities for good that could come from their providential meeting. Their spiritual friendship continued to grow and deepen from their first meeting on February 2, 1922, until the death of Father Arintero on February 20, 1928. Mother Mary Magdalen later recorded these impressions of that first encounter:

"Although externally I appeared somewhat indifferent and without any visible enthusiasm, interiorly I was convinced that the Lord had sent this Father with a mission for my soul . . . . Our souls saw each other and instantly knew each other in an admirable way by some special intuition. At that moment God must have looked at the two of us, and under his divine glance true friendships are formed . . . . From that moment our souls remained so intimately united in the Lord that it was impossible to forget each other before God . . . . The day after my first meeting with Father Arintero, he returned unexpectedly to the monastery at four in the afternoon and asked to speak with the last nun with whom he had spoken on the previous day. They called me and I went down at once, with a joy you can well imagine and my heart melting with thanks to the Lord. We greeted each other briefly, as if we were old friends, for it seemed that we were.

"I asked him: 'Father, how is it that you have returned or have come here today?'

"He replied: 'My daughter, the Lord commanded me to do so. I was not planning to come, but I could not have left Bilbao if I had not returned here. So you see, daughter, it was not I; it was the Lord'."

Father Arintero has been hailed as an international authority in the field of ascetical and mystical theology. His greatest literary work, *The Mystical Evolution*, has been published in several different languages, including English (B. Herder Book Company of St. Louis). He was the founder of the spiritual magazine, *La Vida Sobrenatural*, which is still being published by the Dominicans at Salamanca, Spain. It is also of interest to note that through the intervention of the Dominican Master General, Father Aniceto Fernandez, the Fathers of Vatican Council II promulgated in chapter 5 of the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* a traditional doctrine that had been championed and revived through the efforts of Father Arintero against much opposition: *by the very fact of their baptism, all Christians are obliged to strive for the perfection of the Christian life; all are called to be saints.*

But Father Arintero had more than an academic interest in spiritual theology; he was not merely a speculative theologian. He himself lived the mystical life and his thousands of letters of spiritual direction as well as his countless personal conferences and interviews with holy persons provided him with an experiential knowledge out of which he wrote his books in ascetical and mystical theology. The cause for his beatification is currently under investigation in Rome, where they have already completed the evaluation of his writings.

The identity of Mother Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist was hidden for many years under the pen-name of "J. Pastor," and under this name she contributed numerous articles to the magazine, *La Vida Sobrenatural*. Born at Lucca, Italy, as Josephine Barcucci, she entered the Passionist monastery in the same city and six years later was sent to make a foundation in Mexico with six other nuns. But due to the violent religious persecution that waged in Mexico at that time, the nuns moved to Spain to make a foundation at Deusto (Vizcaya). After being recalled to the monastery in Lucca for a period of six years, Mother Mary Magdalen returned to Spain to establish a second monastery of Passionist nuns in Madrid, where she spent the rest of her life. Her life's desire was to attain the perfection of charity and to be an apostle of love to lead other souls to sanctity. Her spirituality is characterized by a remarkable simplicity and an awareness of the presence of God in all things and at every moment. She died at the age of 72 on February 10, 1960.

Mother Mary Magdalen was summoned to Salamanca in order to give testimony at the diocesan investigation of the life and writings of Father Arintero with a view to introducing his cause for beatification in Rome. Afterward, she visited the tomb of Father Arintero at Cantalapiedra, where she spent two hours on her knees on the cold stone floor of the church, and then remained prostrate for a long time, kissing the ground. It was the first and last time that she ever visited the tomb of her former spiritual director.

Several things should be noted about the correspondence contained in this volume. First of all, the disproportion in the number of letters exchanged is due to the fact that many of Father Arintero's letters have been lost, dut to the transfers of Mother Mary Magdalen from Deusto to Lucca and then to Madrid. Also, Father Arintero frequently answered Mother Mary Magdalen's letters by sending her one of his books or articles with the pertinent passages marked for her perusal. At other times he was able to make personal visits which took the place of a letter.

Secondly, Father Arintero's letters are usually brief and contain relatively little information about his own spiritual life. One reason for the brevity is that most of the letters were written in haste, since Father Arintero was almost constantly occupied with the work of the magazine and travelling around Spain to give spiritual conferences and retreats. But it was also a deliberate tactic on the part of Father Arintero. He wanted to encourage Mother Magdalen to reveal her soul and give expression to the manner in which God was working in her. His reluctance to reveal his own spiritual life was due partly to his taciturn nature and partly to the fact that he was the spiritual director and counselor and therefore his task was primarily to judge, direct and advise Mother Mary Magdalen.

In preparing this volume we have omitted certain things that do not pertain to spiritual direction and are therefore not necessary for an understanding of the spiritual doctrine of Mother Magdalen. We have attempted to be as faithful as possible to the phrasing and expressions of the original Spanish (though Mother Mary Magdalen's letters were liberally peppered with Italian phrases which the Spanish editor translated). Explanatory notes have been added where we felt they would be necessary for those who are unfamiliar with Spanish customs, practices of cloistered nuns or the technical terms of mystical theology.

The direction of Mother Magdalen was taken over by Father Sabino Lozano, O.P., of Salamanca after the death of Father Arintero and the volume of his correspondence with the Passionist nun will also be published in due course.

JORDAN AUMANN, O.P.

1.
HISTORY OF A SOUL

Deusto
February 7, 1922

Very Reverend Father:

With less than a half hour of free time each day (without seeking a special permission), today I begin the brief report which you requested so that, knowing my past life, if it be God's will, as it seems to me that it is, you will be able to direct my soul along the way of perfection in order that I can quickly reach God and lose myself in him. I believe that only then will the desires of my heart be satisfied.

First of all I shall tell you of the ease with which I open my soul to you. After the first meeting with you, I was surprised at how I had been able, without any preamble, to speak to you immediately about things which it would have been very difficult for me to do with anyone else. But if I look back at the way in which God has worked in my soul in the past, I am no longer surprised, for I have always known that it is the Lord's way to lead all things to their terminus firmly and sweetly, and especially with souls that abandon themselves blindly to his arms without any preoccupation with themselves.

When you visited us, I said only this to the Prioress: "If there is time, I would like to speak with Father." I said this without any insistence for I was content with whatever would happen. And the Lord disposed that I should be the one, I believe, who profited the most from your visit. How good the Lord is!

Since you have limited me to eight pages in my report, I shall not be able to write at great length. What I shall now relate extends to my thirteenth year, the time of my conversion to God.

Before I was born, my mother offered and consecrated me to the Blessed Virgin Mary. For that reason I owe it to this heavenly Lady that I returned to the fold. Whatever evil one could do at that age, I did. I was interested in nothing but games, pranks, and worldly diversions. My two older sisters and my mother, who were very Christian, tried to restrain me, but by deception and tricks I obtained whatever I wanted.

The Lord gave me a precocious intellect. I possessed an ardent and lively temperament — more that of a man than that of a woman — which never left me at peace wherever I was. "What will become of this girl when she is older?" they used to ask my mother. But one thing I had in my favor was that after having displeased my father or mother, I would immediately ask their pardon. For that reason they loved me more than they did the others. Also, I was always the first one to remind my sisters that we should go to ask our parents' blessing at night; and it would always make me very happy when my parents would reply: "May God bless you and make you holy."

My father died when I was eight years old. After his death, my mother was very sad and she wept frequently, and this caused me much sorrow. In order to comfort her, I would sit on her knees, put my arms around her neck, and cover her with kisses. For this reason, and because I was the smallest, I was the most loved and most indulged.

I made my First Communion at the age of nine. Jesus was waiting for me there to give me his first call, but I did not know it. After receiving Communion with many other girls, I returned to my place and I felt as if I were being held down by a person of great strength and was incapable of moving. All the others had gone, and my older sister, who was with me, said to me: "Have you finished? We can go now."

What happened at my First Communion did not happen at other times when I received. I repeat, I did not know Jesus then or the operation of his grace. After some months passed, when I was more quiet and serious, I began with greater earnestness than formerly to seek a good that my heart desired, without knowing that this good was God. How energetically I tried to satisfy

in worldly pleasures the infinite hunger that Jesus had awakened in me on the day of my First Communion. I saw myself as a lost sheep, wandering through valleys and hills until the divine shepherd caught up with me. And since he sought me in order to make me one day a daughter of his Passion, he made use of this so that I would return repentant to the fold.

On the Monday after Easter, when the services were over in my parish church (from which my mother never let her daughter be absent), instead of dashing off as was my custom as soon as I heard the final Amen, I remained in a thoughtful mood, seated in the corner of a pew, as if looking for something I could not find. I looked at the people who were leaving and I looked at the altar. Then I noticed two girls of about my own age who were about to make the Stations of the Cross.

As if moved by an invisible force, I arose and went to ask them if they would let me accompany them. Thus began that pious devotion which would later occupy first place among the devotions I loved most. As I looked at the pictures of the Stations — and I scarcely knew what they signified — I felt an inexplicable transformation taking place in my soul. When I finished the Stations, I returned to my home, which was close to the church.

I was no longer the same as before. The hour of grace had arrived and had triumphed. I began to frequent the church, to withdraw from games, to be serious and obedient. On the following Saturday I went to confession — something I formerly did only once a month, when my mother told me to do so. I continued to go to confession every eight days, and after a few months I began to go to Mass and Communion daily.

And now, in order to show the fury of the devil when a soul is snatched from him, I can tell you that I suffered various attacks and one of them was most dangerous because it struck at the very root of my conversion. I don't know if it was the devil himself or if he was within the person he used. I found myself in very serious danger, and it almost makes me tremble even to think of it. This does not seem the place to say any more; besides, I think you will understand. I shall say only that I did not offend God. The Morning Star, Mary most holy, guided my steps and watched over me from heaven.

Before the statue of Mary, in a little chapel dedicated to her, I resolved to leave the world as soon as possible and become a religious. Meanwhile, I did all the good that I could. I taught catechism to children, I gave alms, I visited and helped the sick. I also tried to meditate on death, because the impression made on me was good for my soul. With my confessor's permission, I performed various acts of mortification: I fasted, I chewed on bitter herbs, three or four times a week I wore a hair-shirt, on Fridays I placed stones or pieces of wood in my bed in the form of a cross.

I continued to associate with the two young girls mentioned above, because they were very pious, although somewhat worldly. One day, when I was fifteen years old, I was standing among the trees in our garden when I heard a voice say to me: "Leave your friends, for God has other plans for you." I believe it was my guardian angel. I pass over other favors of the Lord before my entrance into the convent in order to make this short and because, Father, I prefer you to know the present state of my soul rather than the past. I shall mention only one thing and that will suffice so that you can understand my obligation to become a saint.

Almost a year before entering the convent, I heard about the vow of chastity. I asked what it meant. They told me that a person who took the vow should live like an angel, would take Jesus as her spouse, and could not think of or love anyone but him. I immediately asked my confessor for permission to take the vow, and on the feast of Corpus Christi in 1905, after receiving Communion, I offered Jesus my vow to live like an angel.

Everything on that day was disposed to speak to me of purity. Dressed in white, I marched in the procession of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate; I asked permission of the confessor to wear the hair-shirt in reparation for irreverences to Jesus. I believe that this was pleasing to the Lord, because he

rewarded me with such a profusion of graces. As the priest passed by with the monstrance, I fixed my gaze on the white Host, source of purity. And Jesus made me realize that he was the love for which my heart yearned. I don't know how to describe what I felt; I only know that a force drew me to him; I moved forward in order to place myself as closely as possible to him who had wounded my heart. A poor woman, noticing my eagerness, pushed me back, saying: "Do you people always want to be in the first place?" Since my thoughts were so different from hers, I remained quietly where she had pushed me. Then Jesus made me hear these words in my heart: "In heaven you will always follow me, and no one will be able to separate you from me." My soul was submerged in a sea of consolation, a consolation which is not of this world. I wept much.

I know that afterwards they said to my mother: "Your daughter looked like an angel." If they had said even more, I would not have been surprised, for I felt that I was filled with God.

A short time before this incident, I met Father Germain, a Passionist Father and spiritual director of Gemma Galgani. The first time he saw me, he called me by the name that I now bear: "Here is Magdalen the Passionist." When I told him that I had many difficulties, he added: "I assure you before God that you will be a Passionist nun. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the words of God will be fulfilled." On another occasion he said to me: "If I were to see you dead, I believe that God would raise you up again so that you could die a Passionist."

All these things filled me with consolation. Finally, after overcoming many difficulties and at the cost of great struggles with heaven, earth and hell, on June 10, 1906, I and a sister two years older than I, who wished to follow me once she knew my resolve, accompanied by my mother and my confessor, entered the newly founded monastery of the Passionist nuns at Lucca. It was the monastery God had asked some years previous of his servant Gemma Galgani and was situated close to the house in which she died. My mother remained with another married sister, as she does to this day.

In the monastery I felt that I was in a bit of heaven, although I suffered somewhat because of my delicate health, so that it seemed more proper to enter a sanatorium than a life of penance. But Father Germain, who had assured me that I should be a Passionist nun, feared nothing.

Among the many graces the Lord granted me in the convent, one was to meet a holy superior (who died two months ago as a holy nun), Mother Mary Joseph of the Sacred Heart. It is to this religious that the letters of Gemma Galgani are addressed. They have been published in a book with which I am sure you are familiar, *Cartas y extasis de la Sierva de Dios Gema Galgani*. They knew each other in spirit, for they never saw each other. In the Lord the one knew the needs of the other.

In the seven years that I had the good fortune to live with her, how many instructions and examples of holiness she gave me. I knew that she had accompanied Jesus in the various stages of his Passion, and one day while speaking with her I asked her (not because I doubted, but to see what she would say) if it was true that Jesus sweat so much blood in the Garden of Gethsemani that it moistened the earth. After breathing a sigh so sorrowful that I shall never forget it, she answered: "Yes, my daughter, it is true. When I saw his face it was like that of a dying person and it was wet with blood, as the face of a person is wet when coming from a bath."

Father, pardon the disgression. I wanted to give this small relief to my heart, which still suffers from the recent loss of such a holy Mother. I passed the year of postulancy and novitiate under the guidance of that holy teacher. If it had not been for that Mother, who knew so well the ways of the Lord and the tricks of the devil, who at that time more than ever never left me in peace, I do not know if I would have arrived at the profession of vows which I made, through the infinite mercy of God, on July 5, 1908.

After profession the Lord took away somewhat my sensible consolations

and asked of me a stronger love, for my love for Jesus was very tender. One day Father Germain scolded me much on this point; he told me that it was no longer the time to be a little girl and I ought to leave childish things; otherwise he would ask the Lord to send me a strong temptation so that I would become more sedate. And so it happened. For months I saw nothing in my soul but infidelities to the graces of the Lord, sins, a fear that the anger of God would fall upon me, thoughts of despair and of not persevering in religious life, and harshness from my spiritual fathers.

I would get up during the night and go weeping to Mother and she consoled me with great charity. But the consolation lasted only a short time. My infidelities (and I actually committed some) made me tremble and fear for the salvation of my soul. Seeing me suffer, my sister grieved for me, and this made me suffer more.

One day, in a providential manner and by means of Father Germain, the Lord returned the light to my soul and with it, confidence and peace. The proofs of God's tender love for me followed one after the other, but an interior voice told me that I should be prepared, because I would not spend much more time in that monastery.

And so it happened that one day Mother called me. I knelt before her to hear her command, and she said to me in a firm and definitive tone: "You will go to Mexico for a new foundation." This decision shook me somewhat but I was not surprised because, as I have said, Jesus had been preparing me. It was evident that my heart needed some kind of separation in order to rid me of something that was preventing the love of Jesus from taking full possession of me.

Things were already partly arranged for the journey when my mother learned of the decision. The devil, envious of the good that would result if I were to go, used her to stir up a terrible battle. But the Lord, who governs all things and can do whatever he desires without anyone being able to prevent him, once again resolved matters in a marvelous way, and on March 18, 1913, I left with five other nuns for the foundation in Mexico.

What happened in that unfortunate country during the three years that we were there, I leave unsaid, Father, for it would require a separate account, which I have already written at the command of Father General in a notebook of thirty or forty pages. It has been sent to Rome for the information of the superiors. For seven months we had to be completely secularized and four times we had to change residence in order to escape danger. And how many times we commended ourselves to the Lord, thinking that we had only a few hours to live. The shooting was so close that the bullets passed over our house, and once a projectile landed inside the house, leaving a hole where it had passed through.

In the midst of this situation the Lord let us know every day, in some special way, that he was taking care of us as his especially loved children. It was enough to make us weep with tenderness. But those of us who live by faith and know that we have not on this earth a lasting city are little affected or moved by external events. My eyes were fixed on God and my confidence in him never faltered. It is certain that for those who love God all things work for the good.

I don't know how to tell you, Father, how greatly my soul was strengthened during those trials. In the midst of war I was at peace — complete peace. The Lord never denied his light to my soul. And when his light guides us and he is present, one does not suffer, even in the midst of fire.

Things being as they were in Mexico, the superiors in Italy commanded us to return. Meanwhile, our good Fathers in Spain, who had for a long time desired a foundation, invited us to come to this blessed country where the Lord has showered so many graces on my poor soul.

In Mexico, when it was still doubtful whether we would return to Italy or come here, it happened several times that while I was praying before the Blessed Sacrement, Jesus presented himself before the eyes of my soul, carry-

ing his cross, and said to me: "I wait for you in Spain." And since arriving here I have found nothing but graces and consolations. This is not to say that we have not suffered many tribulations; on the contrary, I believe that few foundations have had such trials as this one. I say only that I have not found the cross; I have never suffered anything, because the Lord has never taken the light from my soul; rather, he has increasingly enlightened it, and when the divine light illumines us, it seems, as I have said before, that no external thing is able to afflict us. Jesus carries the cross and I follow him, savoring the sweetness and gentleness of his yoke. "Where, Lord, is that cross which I thought was awaiting me in Spain?" I once asked him.

After I had been here for some months, the Lord bestowed on me the following grace. It was the eve of the feast of the Holy Trinity, the anniversary day of my entrance into religion. I had selected the Office of that day as a thanksgiving to God for having withdrawn me from the Egypt of the world. On the eve of the feast, as I said, while I was praying Compline, I felt the presence of God in a manner that I had never before experienced. I seemed unable to pray or to see what I was reading. The Lord gave me to understand that the *grace of a vocation was a work of love of the three divine Persons.* I realized that this grace is not sufficiently understood or appreciated; only in heaven will we understand what it means to be called by God. And I also understood other things that I don't know how to explain. I can only say that I felt great compassion for those who do not correspond with such a grace and I passed some days — rather, some months — more united to God, with more strength for practicing the virtues, more desirous of mortifying myself and attending diligently to the fulfillment of my duties. I seemed to be led to good without having done anything myself. I began to understand the operations of grace in a soul that does not place any obstacles, and how simple is the way of holiness.

The Lord desires only that we be aware of the love he has for us, without doing any more on our part than to open our mouth so that he can fill it with his spirit. I remember, Father, having read in your magazine [1] that men do not succeed in finding sanctity because of its very simplicity Do not ever tire of repeating this truth, Father. To go in search of sanctity is to walk on that which we already have at our feet. Each day I realize this truth more clearly and am amazed. How little we have to do to become saints! Simply open our mouth, open our eyes. It seems that we have them open for everything except to see the truth.

After receiving the grace to which I referred, others followed at intervals, with the result that they impelled me to die to self and to rid myself of the obstacles of the little defects and imperfections which I saw very clearly were opposed to the spirit of God. I felt that the Lord was asking something of me: the vow to do always that which I considered to be more perfect. I understood this, but I was unable to resolve to do it, for fear of failure. Finally God made me see that my fear proceeded from a lack of confidence in him. For he never demands the impossible from his creatures, and the grace he has given to his saints, he is ready to give to anyone who trusts and believes in his goodness and mercy. I finally resolved to do it, and with the permission of my confessor I did so.

So great was the abundance of grace and peace by which the Lord showed me that I had done something pleasing to him that I didn't have the shadow of a doubt that it was his will. I knew that by this vow I had died to self and had made of myself an offering to that Lord to whom everything belongs; that I had enkindled a fire in my heart, a fire that purifies and kills and gives life.

It is almost two years and a half since I made this vow and it has been for me a source of all kinds of graces — an increase of light to know my own nothingness, of peace, and of freedom of spirit, accompanied by a tranquil fear. But above all, there is an awareness of the continual presence of God, which reminds me of my duties and demands my love. Sometimes I exper-

[1] *La Vida Sobrenatural,* founded by Father Arintero.

ience the love of God so strongly that it seems to prompt me to do foolish things. I like to compare my soul with the twofold movement of the celestial planets. By a movement of attraction I experience an infinite sweetness that impels me toward God; on the other hand, I feel moved to travel in the orbit of the faithful performance of my duties. And this, Father, is the habitual state of my soul.

Some weeks ago I experienced the attraction with even greater force for a period of several days. The Prioress asked me what was the matter, but I could say nothing more than that God was giving me a strong desire for himself. She then told me not to tax myself so much because I might hurt myself physically; that I should distract myself, since this could be caused by my imagination and not by God. I tried to obey her, saying to myself that when the Lord makes me feel his presence again I will say: "Imagination, imagination." The opportunity soon presented itself, but when I was about to say "imagination," what I said was "Jesus," and I remained content, because I knew that only one king reigns in my soul and he is God.

Father, God wants me to be a saint; I feel it interiorly. But it seems to me that the sanctity he asks of me is very simple — nothing of the extraordinary; no great deeds. He wants me to follow the movements of grace without opposition; nothing more. As you see, it is something entirely interior and more God's work than mine.

And now, Father, I have a feeling of great remorse. In all that I have told you, I have scarcely mentioned Mary, through whom all graces have come to my soul and she preserves me in them. I have made a vow to promulgate devotion to her. With a hot iron I have written her sweet name on my heart and in the middle of my chest that of Jesus. Without Mary it is impossible for me to become a saint!

Father, I have written this letter amid many interruptions and I send it to you without re-reading it. It is neither in Italian nor in Spanish, [2] but it has a little of both. I think you will understand it, and what you do not understand you can leave to the Lord. God understands everything.

Without anything further, I beg that you give me your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
March 30, 1922

Dearest Daughter in the Lord:

May the divine Spirit reign always in your soul and guide it in everything along the straight paths of the faithful following of Jesus. May he increasingly reveal to you the kingdom of God which is hidden in our hearts and may he fill you with the "science of the saints" in order to perform in a holy manner the works that are our lot and in all things to do what is most pleasing to God. This is the basis of all sanctity, and with great consolation of soul I saw in your letter how admirably our Lord is conquering you and leading you after him, teaching you that divine science which contains all good things.

As long as you experience those desires of pleasing the Lord in all things, without refusing him anything or seeking anything that satisfies self-love, be assured, my daughter, that everything is from Jesus and nothing from the enemy. This is all the more so, since you desire that everything of yours should pass through the hands of the Blessed Virgin, who never permits any deception that could harm her servants.

Therefore, be at peace and continue as you are, for you are on the right path. And if you wish to explain in greater detail anything that you have told me, especially as regards the Blessed Virgin, or if you think it necessary in order better to understand your present state and that which God is gradually effecting in you, write to me with complete freedom. No one here reads my letters and therefore you can disclose whatever you wish, seeing that our

[2] Since she was Italian and not a native of Spain, Mother Magdalen frequently inserted Italian words and phrases into her letters.

Lord has given you the opportunity to communicate with this poor sinner.

The reason for telling you that eight pages in a letter would be sufficient was only that you would not tire yourself unnecessarily and also that you would not be returning again to those childhood faults, which should be left to the divine mercy and recalled only in a general way in order to animate yourself to correspond with pure love and generosity.

What you tell me of Father Germain seems very good to me. I wanted to meet him while I was in Rome, but our Lord took him. I am also pleased with what you tell me of your former Prioress, and if you see fit to write an article of twelve to fourteen pages for our magazine, it would fit very well in the section "Examples." [3]

My affectionate regards to the good Mother Superior and to all, especially those who spoke with me. May they all continue to be encouraged by what I told them. I ask them to pray for their affectionate servant in Christ who blesses them in his name.

Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

[3] Father Arintero is referring to the two sections of the magazine, *La Vida Sobrenatural*, which feature short biographies of saintly souls and quoted texts on the spiritual life, taken from recognized authorities or saintly people.

2.
THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Deusto
April 7, 1922

Dear Father in the Lord:

Today I read your welcome letter, which I received eight days ago. I wanted to read it at once, but I saw a beautiful opportunity to offer a flower to my heavenly Mother. Jesus has made me understand that he wants no other affection in a soul that he wants to be entirely his own; and what is there to desire after God has made one experience the delights of his love? And how empty everything leaves me that is not God!

At the same time, I appreciate the great grace of spiritual direction, and with great humility and gratitude I receive it from the Lord, who gives it to me through you, as it seems to me. But if it had been otherwise, I would still remain at peace if no one concerned himself with me. I feel that God asks of me such a total detachment from everything that I am incapable of explaining it. Thoughts, ideas, affections, desires — it seems that love despoils me of everything. I remain, Father, in a profound silence, very profound, and incapable of saying anything at all about what God does to a soul that he desires completely for himself — the sweetness and power by which he attracts it, the peace and tranquillity in the midst of an irrepressible longing to be able to drink all the happiness of that infinite ocean, of which the soul has been able to taste but a drop.

It seems to me, Father, that since that day on which the Lord, out of pure liberality and without any merit on my part, let fall on my soul that water from heaven of which St. Teresa speaks, that water which makes the whole garden burst into bloom without any labor of the gardener, everything in me has submitted to that divine Master, everything has yielded to his sovereign rule, everything of my own has fallen to the earth, captivated by the sweetness of that power which is admittedly of God but one cannot describe it. Nevertheless, Father, since you have been so good as to tell me that I may write to you and unburden myself as I see fit, I shall try to say something. Be prepared to hear absurdities, but no matter. I want to tell you what I feel. You who have studied so much and know so many things will not be surprised at anything.

I shall interrupt this letter for Holy Week, which, if it is holy for everyone, is especially holy for the Passionists. The only object of our thoughts during these days must be the sufferings of Jesus. To us, the daughters of his Passion, is confided in a special way the sublime mission of applying ointment to those wounds of love by our tears, of assisting at his agony and death, and of gathering that Precious Blood in order to sprinkle it on souls who do not appreciate its worth. Jesus grants to all, and especially to his ministers, to feel what his divine heart felt on the last day of his life on this earth.

April 17

Having glorified the wounds of our loving Jesus and having sung the Alleluia I gladly take up my pen and accept from the hand of God the consolation of writing to you.

How much each word of your letter tells me, Father, and how well it makes me realize that you understand the needs of my heart when you say: "You can disclose whatever you wish." Yes, Father, I feel that need. On some days it seems to me that I would do anything to find a person to whom I could express what I feel, and those are precisely the days on which I am least able to unburden myself. Sometimes I could talk with servants of God — priests and religious — who inspire my veneration because of their holiness, but I hold myself back because I think they would laugh at me. I cannot say anything to them; and if I did speak to them, I think I would be worse off than before. But

this is not the case with you; on the contrary, I understand you and, from what you have said to me, I know that you understand me.

Now, Father, I am going to tell you how I experience God, his divine presence and the effects it produces in me, so that you can advise me in regard to anything dangerous and can judge what is God's grace. I repeat, Father, that you should be prepared to listen to foolishness, because these are not things that can be spoken of, especially by one who knows neither how to write nor how to speak.

I experience God at all times and in all places — when I am working, when I am eating, and even when I am in bed — but not always in the same manner nor with the same intensity. Thus, when I am alone in my cell and not distracted by physical occupations, I feel drawn by an infinite sweetness and power. My soul enjoys a complete and serene peacefulness, like a sky without any clouds. I know that it is God and I would like to move toward that to which I feel drawn, but I cannot nor do I know where to go. It seems that my hand is in the hand of him for whom I yearn and I need only withdraw it and I would be united with him as I would like.

At other times it seems as if God is carrying me in his arms and he hugs me as a mother does her child. Then I say to him — but no, I don't say anything; I feel — "My God, why are you so good and why do you love this unworthy creature so much?" And I hear him say to me, although rather than hear, I understand: "I do the same to all and I would do so if they would rid themselves of impediments. My desires are to unite myself with souls, and if they cooperate a little, my love will do the rest."

I am so confused at such love and goodness of God that I would like to bend my head to the ground and be reduced to nothing. But I am even more confused and humbled when God is so good to me in spite of my having been so evil.

In order that you may understand, Father, I am going to refer to an incident. The day before the opening of the novena to our Lady of Sorrows (Friday of Passion Week), I had to prepare some paper slips on which were written the virtue which each nun was to practice, to be assigned by drawing lots. They had to be ready by midday and I had just enough time to write them all out. At that very moment the Prioress called me to do something else. I went and did the task in a hurry and left at once. But the Lord doesn't want me to do things in a hurry nor to be preoccupied about what I have to do later. He wants me to think of doing well what is asked of me at the present moment and to trust that afterwards he will help me. The task I performed turned out badly and as a result, Mother called me again a little later and said to me: "This is not done well; I don't like you to work this way." I was interiorly somewhat disturbed, and instead of remaining silent as I should have done, I said: "Mother, I have to write out the slips. Later, when they are needed, you will ask me why I didn't write them." I knew at once that I had done wrong. I controlled myself and finished the task.

The Lord let me know that I had committed four or five faults in a few moments: infidelity to the grace to do all things peacefully and calmly, impatience, lack of respect in the way I answered Mother, bad example to the others who saw me. What was I to do after committing these faults? Humble myself, trust in the Lord, and remain tranquil. And so I said: "My Jesus, I have been evil; have mercy on me." And it seemed that Jesus said to me: "I do not change. Your faults are not able to change my heart in any way. Because I am good, I have loved you, I still love you, and I shall love you." Then he made me experience the sweetness of his love. In such cases, as I have said, I feel very humiliated. I would like to reduce myself to nothingness; but God, on the contrary, presses me closer to himself.

It had been a long time since I had committed any great faults such as these. I asked permission to go to confession and it was granted. I always want to go to confession, and especially after any slight infidelity to grace. And even when my conscience does not accuse me of anything, I always go

to confession when I can. The grace of the Sacrament of Penance increases in me the power to be faithful to the Lord. But when I cannot go to confession, I remain calm, recalling my vow of greater perfection and doing what I am obliged to do by the vow.

Jesus does not interrupt his expressions of love. He loves me always, even when I am bad. He counsels me sweetly and draws me to himself; he draws me but does not succeed in taking full possession of me and that is what makes me suffer. "My Jesus," I say to him, "you are killing me. Why don't you really kill me? Your ardor consumes me, and it consumes me all the more because it does not really consume me."

All my aspirations are summarized in these two phrases: "Jesus love; Mary love." I have made a pact with Jesus and Mary so that when I call them, they answer me with love, granting me a little part of the fire of their hearts which warms my own. These two ejaculations are my favorite ones and practically the only ones I use. They are the first words I say when I arise; they are the last ones I speak before I retire. Sometimes I also say this one, which I like very much and is, I think, from St. Augustine: "O Jesus, ineffable sweetness, fill all earthly things with bitterness for me." And also this one: "O divine fire that always burns and never consumes, exercise your activity in me, transform me into him whom I love." Both of these I like, but the last one best expressed the longings of my soul: to be transformed into God.

All this, which it seems should calm me, does no more than increase my ardor and torment me more. What should I do? It seems that I cannot continue in this state. It is impossible. I say to Jesus: "To die or to go forward."

Tell me, Father, what should I do so that Jesus will act quickly? I feel that I am disposed for anything. I recall that when I asked you whether it was necessary, in order to make progress in the love of God, to pass through that dark night, through those trials and abandonments that the saints endured, you answered: "Yes, daughter, it is necessary."

Then I said to you: "Father, it seems to me that I am being led by a way that is simple, sweet and smooth."

You answered: "Wait, and you will see that you will have to say to me: 'Help me, Father; I can do no more.' " Am I to understand, then, that it is Jesus who will decide when to give this suffering, or is it better to ask him for it? Tell me and I shall do so.

I would like very much, if it were possible, to become a saint without suffering any more than the rest of the exiled sons of Eve. It is not that I am afraid or that I do not like to suffer, for that would be contrary to the name "Passionist," which is synonymous with suffering, in our mission of always accompanying Jesus in his sufferings; but because it seems to me that many souls do not make progress on the road to perfection because they are afraid of the great suffering that is a necessary requisite. And this fear, I believe, deprives them of the truly indispensable requisite, which is to travel along the road without any fear whatever, but with generosity and total abandonment. That is why I say that I would like to become a saint in that way, in order to attract more souls to God. Then, when they love him, let come what may; they will have no fear of anything. The important thing is to set souls on this road, and I am sure that they will not say that we have deceived them if suffering comes to them later. You understand what I mean, don't you, Father?

And now I would like to know something. During that dark night of the spirit, will I be able to fulfill my vows? For you already know, Father, that in addition to the five vows of religion I have other vows: to be humble, patient, obedient, and not to offend God. If I can fulfill all these vows, then let suffering come, for I feel that my love of God is very imperfect. It needs to be purified and refined in order to cut away all that is natural and human in it. Moreover, Father, if the divine Sun is hidden, will not the mystical Moon remain? Do you know of whom I am speaking? Of Mary, the Mother of all my hopes, of mercy, and of love; my sweetest Mother, the mere remembrance of

whom stirs all the fibers of my heart. Fifteen years ago, when I was a novice, I made a vow to love her always as her most loving children do.

And now that we are on that sweet topic that you suggested, I shall explain myself at greater length. I shall begin by describing the origin of that vow. The devil saw that I had nothing to fear from his tricks if Mary remained with me, and therefore he attacked me in that regard. He put the thought in my mind that Mary was not my Mother. Father, have you ever heard any greater nonsense? But there is more, and I am going to tell you everything so that you can see how it displeases the devil when Mary is loved and is called Mother. He put in my mind the thought that when the crucified Jesus left Mary as the Mother of St. John, he in no way intended that the promise or gift should be extended to all men. It was an interpretation given by the Fathers of the Church because it suited them and pleased them, but this was not the intention of Jesus. Then, whenever I approached Mary or called her by the sweet name of Mother, these thoughts filled me with bitterness and sadness. I was unable to remain in such a state, so I wrote to the confessor (since he was unable to come at the time) and asked permission to make a vow to Mary by means of the following formula:

"August 15, 1908

"My vow to my heavenly Mother, Mary most holy.

"O Mary, I believe that you are the Mother of Jesus and also my Mother, because he wished to leave you as such before he died on the cross. I believe that you are the Mother of all men, although many do not behave like your children, and this afflicts me, because it afflicts your maternal heart. Others love you little because they do not know you; but there are also many who do love you, and among them are some who love you very much and are always with you, striving to imitate your virtues. For that reason they are most loved by your heart. This is what I desire, Mary: that you be my Mother. And if you were not, I at this moment would choose you as such by making a vow always to consider you as my Mother and to love you as a daughter, but a daughter among those who love you most and are always under your maternal gaze, prompt to fulfill your wishes and commands. It is a daughter, O Mary, who returns to you repentant and hopes for help in her necessities only from your maternal heart. My Mother, I love you and I shall always love you, and I shall always love Jesus. In return for my love, I ask all the graces I need to do God's will and to believe always in his love until death. Most sweet Mother, your poor daughter, Mary Magdalen, puts her trust in you."

Once I had made this vow, I began again to experience the consolations of the love of Mary. And now, Father, that you may see how in dealing with my soul the Lord has disposed that Mary would always precede as the precursor of his grace, I want to tell you that before making this vow I had asked permission of Father Germain to make a vow of love for Jesus. I shall not tell you the reasons that prompted me to this, because it is a lengthy matter. I shall only say that when I asked Father's permission, he replied: "No, you should not make a vow; simply make a protestation and carry it always in your heart." But after I had made my vow to the Blessed Virgin, permission was granted without any difficulty.

Many things like this have happened to me, so that the Lord makes me see clearly how much it pleases him to find Mary in souls in whom he wants to work with his divine grace and love. Thus, when I asked permission to engrave the name of Jesus over my heart, they did not give me permission. I then asked permission to carve the name of Mary so that, as absolute mistress, she could reign in my heart, and I received permission without any difficulty. Afterwards, the other was also allowed to me. The same thing oc-

curred in regard to the vow of greater perfection. In another letter, Father, I shall tell you more in regard to the Blessed Virgin, especially about what I call "The secret of my spiritual progress," and I wish it were the same for all.

Prostrate at your feet, I ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
April 27, 1922

Dearest daughter in the Lord:

May the risen Jesus keep you always in the loving wound of his sacred side and there make you live a life that is ever more new and completely hidden with him in God.

I was greatly consoled, my daughter, by your letter, seeing that our Lord has deigned to use my poor words to encourage you and speak to your heart. He the one who disposes, and therefore he gives light and all the rest through those whom it pleases him, while the words of others, however good and wise they are, make no impression because it is not through them that God wishes to speak and work at that time. That is why it is not possible to be understood except by those whom he wishes, and there is no use opening one's heart to those who do not understand. That is why God causes one to feel a certain repugnance at such times, while he grants facility to unburden oneself by speaking of holy absurdities to one who can see in them the way God plays with souls.

Therefore, let him play with your soul, my daughter, and then unburden yourself as time allows of all the "absurdities" that occur to you. You can send it to me the next time you write and, as always, with the same freedom of spirit, knowing that all this is to enable you to act later with greater understanding and to glorify God in everything.

I approve of your present inclinations to desire nothing and to be disturbed by nothing, not even by faults of weakness, but to humble yourself peacefully and throw yourself into the arms of Jesus so that he can remedy them, not being preoccupied but content to remain where you are and to give him the greatest pleasure at every moment. Therefore, when he touches you and then hides himself and causes you to yearn for him, cry out with love and ask him for more love, because those wounds are not healed or soothed except by new wounds, by the flowers and fruits of greater virtue and perfection. He hides behind the wall in order to make himself more desired and more loved, so there is nothing to do but call out to him from the desires and longings he excites in the soul. Thus, the way he gives new life to the soul is to kill it with effusions of his love.

By means of this sweet "martyrdom of love," he prepares the soul little by little so that it can bear the martyrdom of pure suffering and the painful absences in which it suffers the pain of loss, having to endure, in union with Christ in the Garden, the insupportable weight of divine justice. When this happens, my daughter, what I told you is fulfilled. Therefore, do not be dismayed, for even when it seems to you that you have lost all good and find in yourself nothing but an accumulation of evils, as if Jesus has been obliged to adandon you forever and there is no remedy for you, then, far from loving you less, he holds you more closely united to himself and is more pleased with you. He sees that you are disposed to suffer everything for love of him, to accompany him in his greatest sufferings, to help him expiate the countless sins that are committed daily, and thus to appease the wrath of God.

Only in this way is the soul prepared for the consummate union in which these sufferings cease and the soul rejoices almost continuously in the vision of the three adorable Persons. And thus, as he told you, he invites all of us, as long as we let him do what he wishes and we remain faithful to him without resisting him in anything.

So you see, my daughter, what you should do. Let him deal with you as he will and give yourself ever more completely to him so that he can play with

you according to his good pleasure. He alone knows what is best for you, and he is disposing you gradually for that which he desires to effect in you. And as you help him by giving me a clear account of all his actions, you also dispose yourself so that in the hours of darkness you will receive with greater trust the assurances he wishes to grant you through my poor help.

So my daughter, continue to unburden yourself as you wish and to tell me with all simplicity whatever "absurdities" happen to you. You will discover that in this way you find greater peace and more love for Jesus. Meanwhile, continue those ardent ejaculations and pray much for this poor sinner who blesses you.

Affectionately yours in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

3.
LOVE OF MARY

Deusto
May 10, 1922

Dear Father:

I would like to tell you what I felt, or rather, what Jesus made me feel after reading your letter, but my heart is so full that if I begin, it will take up this whole letter; and since we are in the month of May, I want to speak to you first about Mary.

Father, do you know what I do? I serve her; I am the nurse of the Blessed Virgin. Knowing the pleasure that this gives me, the confessor told me that in serving one of our nuns who is ill with bronchitis, during this month I should imagine that I am serving the Blessed Virgin. That is what I do and I see with joy that I practice more virtue in regard to this poor sister when I see in her my heavenly Mother and Lady. How good the Lord is, how good!

I shall tell you, Father, what I call the secret of my spiritual progress. It consists of two visits which I have been making to the Blessed Virgin for a number of years—one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The one in the morning, before a statue of the Immaculate Virgin, takes this form: I consecrate myself to her, body and soul; I renew to her my vow of love; I think of myself as dry earth which, to bring forth flowers and fruits for Jesus, needs to be watered, and I look on her as the fountain of this water of eternal life. I ask her to irrigate me with that precious water, and as I kneel at her feet I feel my soul receive light, strength and courage to struggle and to practice the virtues. When I rise from the feet of Mary, how strengthened I am for good! I ask her to live in me with her virtues, to speak through my mouth, to work with my hands, but above all to love God and neighbor through me and enable me to attract souls through sweetness and modesty as she did in order to lead them to God.

I use the first free moment in the morning to hasten to refresh my soul at this fountain of heaven and she seems to be waiting for me in order to give me her blessing. Before the visit, I feel weak and fearful of committing faults; but after the visit, love and confidence in our heavenly Mother replace the fear.

The afternoon visit is before a statue of our Sorrowful Mother. I think of her on Calvary, waiting for me to come to console her. I recite the *Memorare* and then I remain recollected for a few moments. How many things I ask of my Mother! I let my heart ask what it will, but I always ask for these three graces: that by the sorrow she suffered during the three hours she assisted at the death of Jesus, she will help me in the hour of my death; that by the sorrow she felt on receiving her dead Son in her arms, she will grant me to receive him sacramentally in the hour that I shall have to meet him as my just Judge; that by the sorrow she felt in her solitude after the burial of Jesus, she will help me in the particular judgment and will take me in her arms when Jesus pronounces my sentence for all eternity so that I may be carried to heaven by those same arms of Mary. Then, like a drop of water, I shall be absorbed in the immense ocean which is God, and thus will be completed the mission of the Blessed Virgin regarding me, her poor daughter.

Meanwhile, Father, I feel and wish to feel the need for Mary, as a little child that as yet cannot walk feels the need for the maternal arms that support him. This is the path the Lord wants me to take in order to go to him, and without Mary I cannot move a foot or take a step on the path of virtue. With what joy and gratitude I accept from the Lord this way of becoming a saint! How easy sanctity is when Mary leads! How happy the soul for whom Mary suffices in order to become a saint!

Father, because of the desire I have to please Mary and to do good to souls, I have tried to promulgate the daily visit to Mary in the manner in which I do

it in the afternoon and I have succeeded in getting some twenty persons to join with me in spirit to console the Blessed Virgin in her sorrows. Among them are five priests. Would you like to take part? No other condition is required except that one always make the visit, every single day, if only for two or three minutes, and if unable to do it any other way, then at least to do so in spirit. Do and say what a son would to a mother who suffers, and he, the cause of her suffering — for this the heart alone suffices. Silence and love say everything and understand everything.

Whoever promises to do this, makes an appointment with the Blessed Virgin, and if he does not keep it, he makes the beloved Lady wait in vain. These visits, practiced faithfully, have been a source of graces for my soul. The mere thought that Mary is waiting for me, and I must find the first free moment to go to her, serves as a means for thinking of this Mother of love, for loving her, and having recourse to her. To understand this, it is necessary to experience it in practice.

I have asked the Lord that when I go to heaven the name of Mary should be written on the palm of victory that he will give me, because to her is due the glory and I want to show it to all.

And now, Father, I shall treat of your letter. What violence I had to do to my heart to wait until today to unburden myself. Since I now do it with such great pleasure, it serves for making some flowers for my Mother, especially since I fear that through lack of time I shall neglect somewhat the faithful fulfillment of my duties, and these must always be placed above everything else. This is what Jesus desires.

On reading your letter and recognizing in your words the same manner of experiencing God that I have, I felt sentiments of gratitude and love for you in the Lord. But God, from whom all good proceeds, as if fearing to lose something of my love, said to my heart: "I am the one who commends your soul to Father; I am the one who suggests to him what to say to you; therefore to me be the love, gratitude and glory. I do not yield my glory to another."

And I said to him: "Lord, don't you even want me to thank him or show my gratitude?"

"I do not mean that, for Father also plays his part. But there are many souls that I would like to lead by the ordinary path to great sanctity and I do not find among my ministers anyone to whom I can entrust them. The work for the sanctification of souls is not sufficiently appreciated. They say that they cannot or that they do not have time — as if there were anything more important than this in their ministry."

Father, I understood that anyone who hears confessions, preaches, instructs and works to attract souls, does something very pleasing to God, because it all proceeds from his love and Jesus desires that the fire of his love be extended. The sanctification of souls is not only a work of the love of Jesus, but of the tenderness of his love. Jesus is constantly making plans to sanctify souls by this pattern of tenderness and to entrust it to his ministers who, when they gradually reveal this tenderness to souls already disposed by grace, enable them to fly along the way of sanctity. But many say to Jesus, not with words but with actions, that they do not have time, that they have to occupy themselves with more important things. Thus the desires of Jesus are frustrated and the plans for the fire of his love remain in that divine heart to torment it because of his desire to make those souls happy.

But you, Father, are helping Jesus to spread that fire. The afternoon after I spoke to you it seemed that the Lord said to me during supper: "This Father goes in search of souls to wound them with my love." If only I could also do something to extend the love of Jesus. I hope I can do something, because the fire which Jesus has ignited in my heart must not remain inactive. If not now, then after my death I want to communicate it to souls so that they can fill up the empty places that I leave to so many graces and so much love.

And now, Father, I must explain how Jesus makes me understand things, so that when I say, "Jesus has said," you will not think that he speaks to me in an

extraordinary manner, with words. No; it is not that way. To tell you how it is, Father, is not easy, but I shall explain it as well as I can. Then, if you are not satisfied, be so kind as to ask me whatever you wish and I shall tell you, for it would be worse if I were to explain one thing and mean another.

The way the Lord speaks to my soul is so simple that although we could understand each other without saying anything, that would not lessen its simplicity and grandeur. As you already know, Father, in the things of God there is only silence and admiration; everything else diminishes them. It happens with me in relation to God what also happens among men, namely, that without saying anything, one understands the will of the other by a glance or an expression of the face. The same thing happens to me in the presence of God; in his divine eyes I read what he expects of me; he speaks to me with his glance. He makes me understand so many things; he floods my soul with waves of light and love. This manner of God's speaking makes me think of the glance which Jesus gave to St. Peter. If only he could tell us what that glance of the divine Master said to his heart! Another manner of God's speaking is that by which he spoke to St. Paul, or Saul, on the road to Damascus.

The first method is the more ordinary and, it seems to me, the one by which it most pleases God to speak to souls. But for one who recognizes the voice of God in it, the second is no less precious, since both the one and the other proceed from the same God and therefore produce the same effects. Jesus speaks in the first way to all, but how few there are who recognize the voice of Jesus in his glance. If I could say how much so many good souls lose who weary themselves in seeking to know and understand what they could understand and know without any weariness by simply observing the glance of God, which is always fixed on us and especially on those who seek him with love!

Since the Lord, out of his goodness, has made me understand these secrets of his love, secrets that he wants everyone to know, you can understand, Father, the state of my poor soul. I spend hours and days in an ardor which sweetly consumes me and gives me life. Sometimes while I speak, work, or do what I have to do, how my heart burns! And Jesus desires that I conceal everything. Often I hear the other nuns sigh and express certain words which show that their hearts are filled with the love of God. If I were not in control of myself, they would escape from me also, but Jesus makes me understand how much he prefers that his love be hidden. Although it costs a great effort, the more something is suppressed, the more power it has, and thus love is increased by this sweet matyrdom.

Up to now I have been able to conceal everything. If they have noticed anything, it has been in my voice, and that I cannot avoid. When I force myself, especially when I have to read aloud, my voice trembles a little and changes. The Prioress has asked me several times: "What is the matter? Do you have a sore throat? Do you have a cold? Have you been weeping?"

I answer immediately: "It is nothing, Mother; I am fine, thanks be to God." But I know that she is not satisfied.

One day in recreation they were speaking of fidelity to grace and saying that in religious life, if one does all she has to do with fidelity, nothing more is needed to become a saint. I agreed that that was true but that it seemed to me that fidelity consists not only in doing exterior things well, but much more in letting ourselves be led, without resistance, by the interior movements of grace, sweetly following its attractions. And one of the nuns said: "That is what is difficult for me."

I replied: "For those living in the world, who do not live in their interior, yes, it is difficult; but for us, who live more of an interior than an exterior life, it is not difficult at all. On the contrary, it is very simple and almost natural that we should let ourselves be led without any resistance by him who surrounds us with the delicacies of his love."

Then a nun asked me: "Do you always know what God is asking of you and whether you are unfaithful to grace?"

I found myself in a situation from which I knew not how to escape, and I answered: "I think so, by the grace of God" (and that seems to be the truth).

The sister responded: "The Lord has granted you no small grace!" Then I realized that I had said too much but now there was no help for it.

But Jesus gives me to understand that I should not dwell very much on his graces, gifts and favors, because he gives them and stops them when he pleases. Rather, I should concentrate on serving him and doing his holy will. In this regard, when I read your letter, the Lord told me how to understand those precious words in which you said: "Those wounds are not healed or soothed except by new wounds, by the flowers and fruits of greater virtue and perfection." The first part, that is, the new wounds, pertains to Jesus, and I should not preoccupy myself with this. The second, which is the practice of greater virtue and perfection, pertains to me exclusively and I must consecrate myself to this with all my strength.

The Lord has reminded me of this frequently. But if I must tell the truth, it seems to me that I do not practice any virtue because so great is the sweetness which God bestows on everything I do for him that I suffer more in not being able to offer sacrifices to him than in sacrificing myself for him. He has given me an indifference regarding everything; I have no desires and I do not fear anything. To be a superior is the only thing for which I feel any repugnance. Once when they proposed this to me, I trembled and I called to God with all my strength: "Let this chalice pass from me," without adding, "Thy will be done." But if the Lord were to hide his divine light by which he now guides his poor bride, I think I would not remain insensible. Perhaps I am somewhat attached to the sweetness of the love of Jesus. He has always guided me by the path of love, and love would like to cause my death.

And so they can write on my tomb: "Magdalen, Passionist, died of love for Jesus." Instruct me, Father, so that this fire will soon consume me. It seems that I have the answer in the words inscribed on the shield I wear over my heart: JESU XPI PASSIO. The Passion of Jesus, that ocean of love and suffering, that destroyed Jesus as a victim of love, is the furnace in which souls are most quickly consumed as victims of love. Considering what Jesus has done for me, if I were not made of stone, I would already be dead.

I now have a furnace in my heart: Jesus Crucified. At contact with that fire even the stones melt. I shall tell you the way I acquired it. Last year, when I read in your magazine about the spiritual enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and as described in the leaflet you were so kind to send me in your last letter, for which I thank you, I was inspired to do it. But Jesus let me know that in the heart of his Passionist bride he preferred to be enthroned as the Crucified. And so I did it on the fourteenth of September, celebrating in this way the feast of the Holy Cross with its divine burden. I changed the formula somewhat, selecting for the presentation of the act the saints of Calvary: our Lady of Sorrows, our holy Father, [1] St. Gabriel, and St. Gemma. I made the act at the elevation during Mass.

Father, if I tell you that I feel inflamed, do not be surprised; you already know that I have a fire in my heart which is at the peak of its heat. I would like to tell you more but I shall leave it for another time. Now, prostrate at your feet, I ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Salamanca
June 7, 1922

Dearest daughter in Christ:

May he be always with your soul and in these blessed days may he pour forth on it the fullness of his Spirit to renew and transform it and fashion it in all things according to his will.

[1] St. Paul of the Cross. St. Gabriel is also a Passionist saint and St. Gemma Galgani, while not a Passionist nun, nevertheless ardently desired to be a Passionist and was the prime mover in the foundation of the monastery at Lucca, though she died before the monastery was actually established.

I liked very much what you said about the Blessed Virgin and I promptly resolved to join in the two daily visits, which I have been making since that afternoon with great delight and, I hope, with profit. So I think you can count me among your devout associates to see whether your fervor will be communicated to me.

It also occurs to me that it could be printed in the magazine, changing the title a little and signed with a pen-name so that no one will know or suspect where it came from. But in this case I think it would be well if you would enlarge it, adding whatever your heart dictates, and without worrying about the style, which I can retouch. In this way we shall promote greater love for Mary and with it a greater facility in the interior life, for she smooths and sweetens everything.

That is how you gently dispose yourself to embrace Jesus with his cross and then, when he judges it is time to withdraw and leave you to suffer alone, as he did in his supreme abandonment by his Father, you will be ready to embrace the naked cross. My daughter, this hour must arrive for everyone in order to be configured with Jesus in all his mysteries. And those of the Garden and of the "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" are where he is most pleased to have souls accompany him and help him expiate for sins and appease divine justice. And if one does not suffer here, cooperating with strong love and unspeakable merits in the work of redemption and reparation, he will have to suffer it without merit and with unbelievable rigor in Purgatory. Thus, my daughter, if you too are faithful, the hour will come when you will say to me, as I have already mentioned: "Help me!"

But you do right in not being preoccupied with this but in letting God work in you and trying at every moment to please him and to seek the help of your blessed Mother, who facilitates everything. Serve her in the sick sister or in whatever the Superior commands. And with Jesus, offer yourself to everything, *without exception*, with a "Not my will but thine." And when you have lost your own personal judgment in transports of love and wish to live only in conformity with the divine will, then, when he withdraws, you will be content to see him play with you and you will say with Gemma: "If Jesus is satisfied, all is well." He knows when the soul is mature enough for great sacrifices; and when the soul also relies on the special help of the Virgin, she rejoices in accompanying the soul in its solitude.

It is in solitude that love is purified, as the soul learns not to seek its own will in anything, but only the divine will; and faith and hope are tested. The soul will fulfill its vows and do everything without delight, but with more merit. In that dark night of the soul the Moon (Mary) is sometimes present, but sometimes she also withdraws and everything is in darkness and the soul thinks it is lost. But in reality the soul was never more victorious because Jesus and Mary are never so content as when they see the soul remain faithful in the midst of that trial. Then the "new Moon" comes to prepare for the rising of the Sun. [2]

But do not be concerned about this, because what is important is that you remain faithful to the work of each hour. It suffices to know that "to enter the kingdom of God it is necessary to pass through many tribulations." But in all of them the Holy Spirit knows how to "make joy abound."

Continue, my daughter, with courage, completely submissive to the action of the Holy Spirit who by his anointing teaches all things little by little. And when he moves you to write to me or to unburden your heart, do not hesitate to do so at great length and to send it to me as you are able, even though I do not answer, because sometimes I cannot.

With a blessing and commending myself to your prayers, affectionately,

Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

[2] In other words, Mary returns to prepare the way for the return of Jesus to the soul's awareness.

4.
VOW OF GREATER PERFECTION

Deusto
June 30, 1922

Very Reverend Father:

After reading your letter I gave thanks with all my heart to the Lord and his blessed Mother for having made known to you the value of my secret and that you are taking part in the two daily visits to our Mother. In this way our souls will be more united in the Lord and we shall understand each other better.

As to your desire that I enlarge on it so that it can be published in the magazine, [1] I have taken this as an expression of the will of God, who for some time now has given me to understand that it would be pleasing to him if I were to make it known. I was thinking of writing it so that it could be made known after my death, but I could not do it because I feel a certain repugnance in speaking about personal matters (except to my spiritual director) and I do not want to reveal anything except by obedience. Nor does it usually please the Lord that anyone see the work that he does in souls until it is completely finished. Therefore, once again I must admire the beautiful *"fortiter et suaviter"* [2] with which God disposes all things. So I am sending you this little article, which comes from the depth of my heart, or better, from the most pure heart of my beloved Mother with each word of which I want to offer her a countless number of hearts that will know and love her.

When I started to write, I asked our sick sister to make a novena of two hours of her sufferings each day. Consequently, whatever there is in it of good is from the Lord; only the mistakes and errors are mine. I have written it in the first person because the third person is more difficult for me. You will know how to edit it as you see fit; I am satisfied that no one will know its source, even remotely. I would be afraid of breaking our holy Rule, which commands that Passionist nuns be dead to the world and that no one speak of them. To be more certain, perhaps you could sign it with your own initials or those of one of your brethren who is very devoted to the Blessed Virgin. Whatever pertains to the Blessed Virgin fits all of you very well because you are sons of a saint who greatly loved the Mother of love (though my holy Father loved her no less). [3]

Since the words of Sacred Scripture have such power to work prodigies of sanctity in souls, more indeed than anything else, if it seems proper to you, Father, perhaps you can insert in the proper places some sentences from this divine knowledge to confirm our poor words. And as a greater stimulus, perhaps you could obtain ecclesiastical approval and some indulgences before you publish it. Only the holy Church can make such things receive the esteem and appreciation they deserve. Do what you can, Father, and I shall assist you with my poor prayers. In working to give joy to Mary and to make her loved, one does not get weary. We can be content if we achieve this. For my part, after this consolation I would gladly sing my *"Nunc dimittis."*

Believe me, Father, I do not find myself at home in this world. I feel like someone who is lost, who longs anxiously to return to the hands of him to whom he belongs. A few days ago a priest came here to visit a relative of his and I went with her to the visiting room. On leaving, the good priest said he prophesied that she would die soon so that she could see God and be united with him. To hear a minister of God speak in this way gave my heart such a start that it seemed it was trying to escape from the body. Fortunately I was

[1] *La Vida Sobrenatural.*

[2] "Firmly and sweetly."

[3] By "holy Father," Mother Magdalen means St. Paul of the Cross, founder of the Passionists.

able to return to my cell and lie down for a while. When I feel like this I am happy and I experience such great pleasure that it cannot compare with any pleasure on this earth. But later I am afflicted with painful fears and I think: who knows if this is true love or the illusion of an ardent and sensitive nature?

When I kiss the wounds of Jesus, it seems that he says to me: "These are the proofs of my love for you." But I cannot say anything similar to Jesus. I want to give sure proof of my love, of course, and to be assured that I truly love him. You will be able to tell me whether or not my love is genuine enough so that I can say truthfully: "O Jesus, I love you." I seem to feel disposed for everything. If you were to ask me to sacrifice all spiritual consolations, even that of being able to unburden my soul to you when I need it most, I would be content, as long as I could be sure of saying truthfully: "O Jesus, I love you." This would fill all the emptiness of my soul and would dispose me to say truly at the hour of death: "O Jesus, I love you."

I have told you, Father, that I desire to suffer something in order to give proof of my love for Jesus, but suffering frightens me. Three weeks ago I asked permission of the confessor to wear the penitential band for longer than the usual time. [4] He asked me if it did me any harm, and I told him only — and not always — a small wound which healed immediately without causing me pain. He gave me permission to wear it and he asked me to offer it for a few days for the conversion of a sinner. One morning, when I was about to put it on, Jesus said to me, like a mother who must give her child the medicine prescribed by the doctor but tries to find a way in which the child can take it pleasantly: "Instead of wearing it on the leg, wear it around your neck and then you can also make reparation for low necklines." This had never occurred to me, and since then I have worn it almost always around my neck. I repeat, how good Jesus is. Yes, Father, every day he makes me realize his goodness more and I am consumed with the desire that it be known by all.

The Lord has granted me the grace to see his goodness in all things. I see it when things go well because it is the hand of the Lord that directs and governs them. I see this same goodness in adversity because it is he who sustains us so that we shall wait for him patiently. And I also see his goodness when he illumines my soul with his divine light and makes me understand something of his infinite beauty or, with the same light, makes me see my nothingness, misery and lowliness.

If I ask any permission of the Prioress, I see the goodness of the Lord whether she grants it or refuses it. In this respect, Father, I could tell you many things, but I am too prolix in writing and when the Prioress sees so many pages of writing, she says to me: "What? Do you have the revelations of St. Teresa?" In this regard I would say that the Lord makes himself so evident in superiors that I see him in them. Yes, when I am near the Prioress I feel the presence of God more. In recreation she always wants me to be near her, and if I am not there, she says: "Mother Magdalen, come here." Then, if she sees that I am somewhat recollected, she tells me that this is not the time to meditate but to speak. And I say to myself: "It is she who causes me to be recollected because she makes me experience God the more." I think that this spirit of faith in superiors is the reason for the great peace which I enjoy habitually, which sometimes causes the Prioress to say: "Mother Magdalen has two paradises, one in this life and another in the other" or "If it is necessary to suffer in order to become a saint, I do not know how Mother Magdalen will become a saint, for she does not suffer at all."

God makes me understand that to see God in one's superiors and in what they do is the same thing as to be carried in his divine arms. From this follows as a consequence the first paradise in this life and a pledge of the second

[4] The penitential band refers to the metal or wire band, usually studded with small protrusions, which is worn by persons who wish to perform bodily penance. It may be worn around the leg, the arm, or sometimes around the waist.

which will be enjoyed in the next life. The Lord has caused superiors to do almost extraordinary things for me without their realizing it, as a reward for the faith with which I approach them. O Father, what the Lord does for souls in small things which people disdain as insignificant! When God sees that something can redound for the good of a soul, he becomes as concerned as if he feared he would lose his glory. I am consoled by the thought that we have all eternity to sing the mercies of God, but in the meantime, there is nothing else for us but to resign ourselves to our inability to know them all, though we often say: "How good is the God of Israel." If we could only make everyone know this! If only I could do something!

I place in your hands, Father, my whole being, my life, if it seems pleasing to you to offer it to God for the sanctification of souls, so that all will respond to the loving invitations of Jesus to sanctity. Jesus Crucified has made so many saints because he has sacrificed himself and has died for love. A bride cannot seek anything else than to imitate her bridegroom.

O Jesus, if it is necessary that my life be offered in sacrifice amid a thousand sorrows, as was yours, for the sanctification of souls, I offer it to you, trusting in your divine grace to be faithful to you. Jesus died on the cross to save us, to make himself loved.

"When I am lifted above the earth, I will draw all things to myself." To draw, that is, to make himself loved with the tenderness with which the saints love.

Some weeks ago, after Communion, Jesus made me understand something regarding that which I have just said. I feel a consuming desire to be a saint and to sanctify souls. I want to do everything in order to give a saint to the Church but first I must begin with myself. Help me, Father, and I shall help you. Examine all that I tell you, because I do not trust my ardent desires. As I told you in another letter, I am afraid it is all an illusion and not true love. In the midst of these fears I am somewhat consoled by what Bishop John Volpi, confessor of Gemma Galgani, told me on one occasion in order to correspond with the graces of the Lord: "Discuss the matters of soul with a person who understands and is very devout, and rely on your tender devotion for the Blessed Virgin, who will protect you against all the snares of the devil." These words console me.

I would like, Father, to tell you something of my prayer and certain doubts concerning the fulfillment of my vow of greater perfection, but I would write at too great a length. God give you the patience to read my manuscript. Humbly, I beg your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
August 1, 1922

Dear Father:

I was hoping that you would come on one day or another, but since I see that you may be delayed for some time yet, I shall write you in order to keep everything together. I shall explain, Father, how I was motivated to make the vow of greater perfection, how I understand it, how I fulfill it, and a few doubts that sometimes trouble me.

When I arrived in Spain from Mexico, the Lord prepared a little respite for me, meaning that my soul enjoyed the love of God more and was more united to him, though at the cost of suffering, because for one who desires God alone, he is its only comfort. In Spain I began to perceive stronger calls from the Lord for a life of greater perfection. God spoke to my soul with interior lights and he also used external things, since our situation in Lezama (our first residence in Spain) was very well suited for practicing the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.

The house and its location were not at all suited for making a foundation. For over half a year we were without the Blessed Sacrement because the authorities would not give permission for a foundation. Moreover, we were few in number and one was sick and incapacitated. Things being this way, it

was obvious, Father, that a special grace from God was necessary so we would not lose heart; and grace was not lacking. O God, it is never lacking. My soul was more and more united to him; in him it found rest and encouragement. I remembered what God said to Gemma Galgani: "I need victims," and this gave me the courage to push forward, in the hope of increasing the number of victim souls that Jesus, in the excess of his love, said that he needed. I also recalled that Pope Pius X had given permission for our foundation on the condition that the religious offer themselves as victims for the Church. All these considerations helped me, but even more so, what the Lord worked directly in my soul, especially when I practiced charity toward the sick nun to whom I have referred.

How many lights the Lord gave me! In this way he was admirably disposing my soul for a deluge of graces which he later sent me, without my meriting them in any way. I attributed so many favors from God to the prayers of the sick nun, for she was a saint and the child of a miracle. In the world she was a mute, but she received the power of speech at the tomb of St. Gabriel [5] and together with it, the vocation to our religious institute, taking the name of Gabriela of the Sorrowful Mother out of gratitude to her saintly benefactor.

God never ceased asking my love and fidelity and sometimes he drew me so forcefully that I felt drawn out of myself so that I seemed to be more in heaven than on earth. I wanted to discuss the affairs of my soul with someone, especially after this favor which I have just mentioned, but I could do nothing but offer my desire to God. One day a holy priest came to visit us. We all went to greet him, and I knew at once that he was a soul of God. Although I was able to speak with him only a few times, this good minister of the Lord did much good for my soul and I shall always be grateful to him. I still have three of his letters, filled with holy teaching, which I read now and then as spiritual reading.

Meanwhile, God was making himself felt more each day in my heart, asking greater perfection and love from me. He especially made me realize that I should perfect myself in the virtue of obedience. Sometimes I seemed to hear within me: "The Prioress wants you." I would go to her and as soon as she saw me, she would say: "Mother Magdalen, I wanted to see you." This sometimes happens to me now also, but it has nothing of the extraordinary about it. God does this with all who fix their eyes on him in order to please him, *sicut oculi ancillae in manibus dominae suae.* [6] The divine light often prepares the soul so that it will be disposed to do God's will. It was then that I began to enjoy greater interior peace because I saw with greater clarity that it was God who produced it. Ah, Father, when the soul begins to understand what God does in and for it, then it begins to live in an atmosphere of confidence and habitual peace; at least, it has been that way with me. Then it is that the Lord can approach the soul without hesitation and ask some particular thing, certain that the soul will not refuse. And the soul itself feels the necessity of doing something to give God some proof of its love. I felt this need; I understood that God desired something of me, without knowing clearly what it was, though in general I knew that he wanted greater perfection and love.

The thought came to me of the vow of greater perfection, and also that vow which our holy Father and Founder made of doing always what was most contrary to nature. I asked permission to make this second vow, at first for nine days and then to renew it each month. In the end I stopped making it because I had no confessor competent enough so that together with delicacy of conscience, my soul might maintain the holy freedom I have always liked and with which the Lord wants me to serve him. For this, I think that the confessor must have good spiritual perception in order not to let anything happen; but at the same time he must be liberal so that the soul will be reassured

[5] St. Gabriel Possenti, a saint of the Passionist Congregation.

[6] "Like the eyes of the handmaid on the hands of her mistress."

and will act with freedom and without fear. Rather than act with fear of offending God at every step, I prefer not to make any vows, because the loss is greater than the gain. That is why I stopped renewing the vow.

But the Lord did not cease to move my heart, supplicating and doing it sweet violence so that I would grant what he desired, and at the same time giving me a clearer idea of the vow of greater perfection. But I did not succeed in resolving the matter, partly because of the reasons I have just explained to you, but much more because of my pusillanimity, cowardice and lack of confidence in the Lord. Being as certain as possible that God desired this of me, I should have relied on his grace. Yet the confessor (a different one) prudently waited in order to know better the plans of the Lord concerning my soul, which he was not long in discerning, because one day he told me that I should make the vow for a specified time.

I was pleased to see this determination in the confessor. This is one of the principal qualities I have always wanted to find in those who direct my soul. When spiritual directors are free of all human sentiment and seek only to assist God in the sanctification of souls, as it is certain all of them do, I do not know why they should proceed with fear. They have a special grace from the Lord to fulfill the ministry which he himself has confided to them. To proceed with doubts and fears, whether they will succeed or not, cannot be pleasing to God because it does no good for souls; and it shows little confidence in God since they do not stop to consider that their office carries with it the graces necessary to accomplish it well.

Returning now to what I was saying, I was consoled by the determination with which the confessor spoke, and on the appointed day I pleased Jesus by making the vow. There are so many things that I should tell you about this, Father, that I don't know where to begin. I'll tell you some of them, but it would be impossible to speak of everything. What words can describe what occurs between God and the soul when, rid of all obstacles, it opens itself completely to receive his loving communications? You know this well, but this does not excuse me from saying what I can, leaving the rest for heaven.

I felt or understood that my will was united to that of God, that grace had triumphed over me, verifying in me what Father Germain had told me ten years earlier: "The day will come when grace will triumph completely over you and you will become holy. This will happen when your own will has disappeared totally." These words, which he spoke to me in no ordinary tone, were fulfilled on this occasion. Yes, Father, whatever there is of good in me is exclusively the work of grace. *"Dextera Domini fecit virtutem."* [7]

The Lord protected me under the shadow of his wings, preserving me from sin in the world. Jesus protected me when I was a little girl, waiting with divine patience until I would abandon myself to his love. Now, with the light he gives me, I understand all the loving designs which God used to draw me to himself and to bring to completion the plans he had for me, which seem to have been nothing other than to love him, to love him very much and to make him loved by the many souls who seek God but seem to fear his love and do not abandon themselves to his sanctifying action as he desires.

After making the vow, the Lord placed before the eyes of my soul what Father Germain had said. I then understood that his prediction had come true: my will would be lost in God's will, and his love would take possession of me to sanctify me and transform me into himself. Since that day my path has been illumined by a new light; everything has been presented to my eyes in a manner totally distinct from before.

I understood that sanctity is nothing other than the union of our soul with God and that this union is verified in an instant and in a manner so simple that at the same time that the soul recognizes the grandeur to which it has been elevated and that there is nothing else to desire, it seems to ask itself: Is that all there is to sanctity? It had thought it necessary to do much in order to reach sanctity, and on seeing how simple it is, the soul is amazed and at the

[7] "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

same time convinced that it is truly so. Once the obstacles are removed, the soul doesn't have to do anything else; the Lord does all the rest. The simple manner in which all this happens seems incredible, but it is so. That is what assures the soul most of all that it is God who works, for only his infinite wisdom can work in this manner, making greatness simple and putting it within reach of our weak intellect, which often does not find God because it seeks him in greatness or in that which appears so, without understanding that God himself is greatness.

Once our own will has been set aside (or that which is exclusively our own, which is sin), without doing anything more or adding anything, what is left is God, and we in him — hence the simplicity of it all. Understood in this way, there is nothing fantastic, imaginary or illusory in sanctity; all is real, certain and secure. Our only effort consists in ridding ourselves of the obstacles, and this is done by trying to perfect ourselves in performing the duties proper to us, and they are for the most part so ordinary and small that one scarcely adverts to them. But God is so mindful of them that he is satisfied simply by our care and diligence, which even considered in a material sense are to our advantage.

On this path there is no stone against which our foot can stumble; we can walk with security. There are no dangers of any kind; everything is easy and within the capacity of all. To tell you everything about this and to continue explaining it, with the grace of God, would require time and effort, and I could fill pages. But the Lord doesn't need time or many words. He who said, *"Fiat lux,"* and light was made, illumines the soul in an instant and it understands everything without the shadow of a doubt. If I have any doubt, it is how to explain all this to you, Father.

On making the vow to which I referred, I seemed to hear within my soul: "Fire, fire," and these words: *"Ignis consumet omnia."* [8] Fire consumes everything and this must be the fire that Jesus brought to the earth and with which he desires to inflame all hearts. I also remembered what St. Francis de Sales said: "When a house is on fire, everything is thrown out the door and windows." The fire ignited in my soul had this effect, because everything of me disappeared and Jesus remained absolute master of my heart. Of all his commandments, he asked only one of me: "Thou shalt love me." O holy law of my God which contains everything in these words! Nothing further would have been needed if men understood this. All the other commandments have been given because the Lord saw the hardness of our hearts which, instead of giving their love to him directly, have fixed it on creatures.

"O Lord, may he who does not love you or does not observe your holy law, the law of life and love, be anathema!" My words have no force, but those of St. Paul do, and with all my heart I repeat: "May all be anathema who do not love Jesus Christ and do not keep the holy law of God. O love of God, how little you are known!"

Also, Father, on this occasion it seemed that there descended on my soul the precious water from heaven of which St. Teresa spoke, which without the work of the gardener makes the flowers of the virtues sprout and blossom. Actually, since then I have practiced the virtues with much ease and with only that little effort which the Lord in his goodness lets us exert to increase our merit and be able to reward us more abundantly. How good our God is! Father, I could tell you more about the goodness of the Lord, but I shall do so elsewhere. Now I shall tell you how I understand the vow of greater perfection and how I fulfill it.

The Lord has given me a great esteem and appreciation for that vow. I almost dare to compare it with the sacraments, because just as they confer a special grace, so it seems that the vow, made with prudence, counsel, and the sole purpose of pleasing God, confers the grace to fulfill faithfully what has been promised. As an act of religion, the most excellent of all the moral virtues, the vow greatly increases the merit of the good one does, and in two

"Fire consumes everything."

ways: first, because of the good work performed and secondly, because in doing it by the vow, it becomes a work of religion and divine worship.

For example, if I speak of the Passion of Jesus or if in kissing the wounds of the Crucified, I ask that by those kisses he give light to souls so that they may know the infinite love with which he suffered for them, I perform a good act, as we always do when we recall how much our souls cost Jesus. But having made a vow at my religious profession to promulgate devotion to the Sacred Passion of Jesus, I also perform an act that fulfills the vow. The same is true of the vow to promulgate love and devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In this vow more than in others, Father, I have recognized the special grace which the Lord gives to fulfill what I have promised in the vow. Before making the vow I was remiss and inconstant in my love of Mary, but the vow made me prompt, stable and attentive to seek and utilize occasions for making her loved.

Regarding the vow of love of Jesus, what shall I say, Father? If love is of itself so powerful, what must it be to make acts of love under the vow, to oblige ourselves that our life be an uninterrupted act of love? It seems that such is my life — a continual act of love, sometimes more intense and sometimes less, but always love, love without ceasing. It is love that sustains my weak existence and it will be love that consumes it on that not too distant day when, in the bosom of God, my vow of love will be fully realized. But will my love be true? Tell me, Father. No one could know better, because to no one do I open my heart as to you.

And now, putting everything else aside, I shall speak about the vow of greater perfection, because this is a vow that embraces many things; it is of an infinite extension to which, surely, no creature can attain. It is necessary that you should know how I understand the vow or to what extent the Lord asks me to observe it so that you can judge my situation, advise me when I fail and give me suitable advice.

I do not understand as the more perfect that which is more perfect in itself, but that which is more in conformity with what grace demands in each particular circumstance. It is not possible to have a fixed rule in this matter, since we must judge according to the circumstances of each case and the physical and moral disposition of ourselves and those around us. And therefore it may happen that what is more perfect in one instance is not so in another. But there is no doubt that the more perfect is always that which is done under the influence of grace, and the more one gives himself to grace in every respect, the more he succeeds in what he does and the more it contributes to his personal sanctification.

For example, I may perform an act, not because God asks it of me, but because it seems good to me. As long as the action does not prejudice my obligations, there will be a reward from the Lord for the good intention. But this is not the more perfect and it will not profit me much, because it was not in the plan disposed by God for the sanctification of my soul. It will remain an isolated thing, outside the spiritual edifice of my sanctification. Consequently, those things that are done, not because we are moved by grace but because it seems that if we do not do them we shall not become saints, always turn out defective and often bothersome and tedious for ourselves and for others. But this does not happen when it is God who asks these things of the soul, because the spirit of the Lord is gentle and does all things with sweetness. But how can we always know what grace asks of us, in order to let ourselves be led without resistance and to do nothing unless moved by grace? This is the most important point and although it is easy and simple, I do not know why it is the most difficult for many souls. I would like to state it well and I am certain that although I am poor in ideas and expression, you will readily understand me. At first sight it seems difficult, but in reality it is not so. When well understood, the things of the Lord are all easy and simple. This is the sign that they are from God.

As I understand it (and you can be the judge), for souls that God leads by the ordinary way, such as myself, the way to succeed in always acting in ac-

cordance with God's will is to take as the more perfect the things of everyday life, with all their consequences and the circumstances that surround them, without subtracting anything or adding anything of our own. This is the degree of perfection that the Lord asks of me in fulfilling this vow and I do not preoccupy myself with seeking greater perfection than this, because nothing seems more secure to me than to try to perfect oneself in ordinary duties, accepting them as they present themselves or are previously ordained. In this way, Father, I control myself and always maintain myself in peace, without endeavoring to seek perfection outside the ambit of my duties, which would cause me disquiet and doubt, as something without limit or any fixed point. Everything is regulated and measured by the hand of God, the merciful Father, who knows my strength and will never ask anything of me beyond my capability. Then my soul will enjoy tranquillity and peace, which are worth more than anything because they are indispensable conditions for living in communion with God and of knowing his divine wishes.

And if the Lord should ask anything out of the ordinary from my soul, not even then should it be disturbed by doubts and fears — whether God wills this or not, whether it is the Lord or not, whether I shall fail. Being absolute master of our poor being, God can doubtless dispose of us, his creatures, as he pleases, for there is no rule or method he has to follow. But in this case the ministers of the Lord, as instruments in his hands, will by their decisions give immediate assurance to the soul. But even if it does not have this certitude, it seems to me that the soul can be content and at peace, since God does not ask of it more than the ordinary. It will not be unfaithful to grace even if it experiences inspirations, because one is not obliged to follow them as long as one is not certain. God does not lack the means to make this known and the soul disposed to obey him will know it promptly. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is light, peace, and calmness. God cannot be present in confusion or disturbance. *Non in commotione Dominus.* [9] Going in search of the more perfect. one could quickly fall into tumult and lack of peace, but seeking perfection in that which one is certain God wishes, gives peace to the soul. This is the way I proceed. Is it not an easy and simple way? It is true that the ways of the Lord are not known, but they are easy; it is we who make them tedious.

In making the vow, I did not intend to oblige myself to do the more perfect in trifles such as a word, a movement, to be on my knees without support, the manner of placing the feet or the chair, etc. The Lord has given me good intelligence; I understand and learn things quickly and do them without much effort. I have a vibrant and active temperament and to control it I have had to struggle and still have to watch over myself. If not moderated, it can very much impede perfection and change this gift of the Lord into a nest of defects and imperfections, while one who uses it well is greatly aided in sanctity, since a sound intelligence enables one to select the most secure means for attaining it. I am also of the opinion of St. Teresa, who said that foolish persons are of no value to God or to the world. I am therefore very grateful to the Lord for giving me the grace to dedicate myself to the end which he has proposed: to know him, to love him, to serve him, to disdain all earthly things and seek the things of eternity.

Neither did I oblige myself in times of doubt to spend time thinking and considering what would be the more perfect. The confessor told me: "When you are in doubt concerning two things, you may act freely and do either the one or the other." And this is what I do. And if later I realize that it would have been better to act in a different way, I am not disturbed by this, although in confession I accuse myself of these doubts or trifles in order to humble myself, receive advice and an increase of grace, and to be more attentive in the future. And how many graces, Father, I receive in this sacrament! What a consolation it is to go to confession. For some time now I have been able to go to confession two or three times a week. What a blessing! The

[9] "God is not present in disturbance."

soul that approaches the Lord who is holiness by essence, feels constrained by the necessity of purifying itself more and more and of constantly repeating *"Amplius lava me, Domine."* [10]

From what has been said, I think you can know my disposition and feelings in regard to the vow which, if made without consideration and without any particular inspiration from the Lord, could expose one to commit many faults. I do not forget what Scripture says; namely, that it is better not to make a vow than to make it and then not keep it, but it is also true that sometimes ignorance and always the devil, envious of our good, make things seem more difficult than they really are.

In the service of God we find difficulties only when we fear them, when we proceed with reservations and cautions. But if we give ourselves to him completely, without fear or restrictions, the way will become smooth and one will feel as if being led by the hand. If one proceeds by half measures on the road to perfection, he works more and makes less progress. I know this from experience. This vow has made me give myself to the Lord completely. It carries with it, it is true, a continuous death to my soul, but he who died for love of me is always before my eyes, and he gives me strength. And what a difference there is between my death and his! I, in my mystical death, abound in joy because heaven, which was closed to all consolation for my dying Jesus, grants divine consolations to my soul. Consequently, it does not cost me much effort; I do everything sweetly, and the Lord does the rest. But one should not believe that God does everything, that one is carried toward the good without exerting himself to take a step. That is not so. If, when speaking to the novices or the young nuns who, in their humility sometimes come to me to propose certain doubts, I say, "God does everything," I am very careful to explain the sense in which it should be understood, so that they will not think: "If God does everything, I'll just sit here and wait until he comes to make me a saint." No; it isn't that way. We can do nothing without God, but God doesn't want to do everything. He wants us to cooperate with him. In a certain sense it is rightly said that God does everything, because without his grace we cannot even have a good thought; but if we consider that sufficient grace is always available, disposing and stimulating us to good and supporting us in doing good, and if we do not accept it, it remains in its sufficiency and is of no use to us, then one can understand that we also have to do something on our part. That something will be to conquer the resistance of our nature and not to yield to an excessive fear of our own weakness, forgetting that with the Lord we are strong and he will never leave us to work alone.

To follow grace it is necessary to be always ready to say what St. John Berchmans said: "When something is asked of me which I cannot do without failing in my obligations, I shall not hesitate to say to anyone at all that I cannot do this." Failing in fidelity to little things which present themselves to us at every step, the moment of grace passes by and sanctity escapes as well.

Whether it is possible to practice virtue without any contradiction on the part of nature and whether the saints succeeded in doing this, I do not know. What I do know, Father, and what I can say is that I am not in this state nor do I even aspire to it, because it seems to me that not to experience this contrariety would add nothing to love. By the grace of the Lord my evil inclinations are controlled; they do not bother me very much, although I sense within me all the evil of a sinful nature, which makes me recall what you said in your admirable book, *Mystical Exposition of the Canticle of Canticles:* that human nature was corrupted under the tree. Sometimes I experience this nature when a movement of pride, anger or sloth escapes me, but, thanks be to God, this is less and less frequent and does not disturb me. Rather, it serves as a warning not to lay down my arms, thinking that the enemy is dead. And how closely, Father, the enemy watches to see if one will take even a moment of rest, so that he can open a breach and take possession of a soul which for years has not belonged to him and has scarcely ever belonged to

[10] "Wash me yet more, O Lord."

him. With these enemies so close, it would seem that one should be always fearing and trembling, for Scripture says: "Work for the salvation of your soul in fear and trembling." This applies to the spiritual life at a certain time, and I also experienced it for a while, as I told you in my first letter. Even though it says that in Sacred Scripture, the soul need not always be in that state. No, that cannot be; it changes, and then Sacred Scripture assures the soul by saying: *"Timor non est in caritate."* [11]

In the present state of my soul, fear has yielded to a tranquil and secure confidence in him who has given me so many proofs of his love. And if at times I fear anything, it is a fear that does not prevent me from reclining my head and resting tranquilly in the arms of my God. There I forget my weakness; I feel strong, stronger than all my enemies and strong with the strength of God.

When I feel myself persecuted by the enemy, I run to the arms of Mary, as our holy rule advises: "When they feel disturbed by any cloud of sadness or melancholy, let them hasten to hide themselves in the arms of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as a child runs to the arms of his mother when fleeing from someone who frightens him." Mary will not abandon us. She knows well, this tender Mother, that there is no place more secure for the fearful soul than her maternal arms. But as soon as the fear has been replaced by confident love, we find ourselves, without being aware of it, in the arms of God.

There the Lord makes me understand what Jesus means, or in what sense he speaks in his holy Gospel, when he tells us: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of God." The child doesn't see danger anywhere because as yet he does not experience the *"fomes pecati"* [12] which are hidden within him, and therefore he does not incline to evil. He is tranquil; he does not fear; he does not see or know the dangers; and if he knows anything, he is not frightened, but runs to him who protects him by opening his arms and saying: "Let the children come to me." And we also, if we suppress our evil inclinations and mortify our passions, little by little they lose their force and remain hidden as in the child. They no longer disturb us, and for that reason they are not seen nor are dangers feared. This is the way Jesus wants us to become little children, not to act childishly, as one who does not know or understand what he is doing, thinking that to become foolish is pleasing to Jesus. No, that is not the way we must become little children, but by trying to suppress and, as far as possible, extinguish evil inclinations by performing the opposite acts. In this way, without being aware of it, we shall find that we have become little children to whom Jesus opens his arms.

I have experienced this in myself. Formerly, when I saw or heard or did certain things, I was afraid; it seemed to me that they were not good and they would lead me to evil. But now, such is not the case. I know that the evil was not in those things, because everything that God has made is good; the evil was in myself, in the sin I had committed, and it was something of my own. And hence, in the measure that I extinguish the evil that is in me, I cease to see it in other things, which are more and more presented to me as good, since I see them with the pure and simple gaze of a child. Whatever one's past life has been, even if one has grown old in vice and sins, he can arrive at this other state. Yes, Father, we can all do it. I would like to say to all, whatever their state or condition, that their past life can never be an obstacle to them in becoming a child in this sense. When, from heaven, I shall be able to realize my desire to direct souls, this will be one of the things that I shall teach.

Meanwhile, my will is in the hands of God and I shall never again take it back. I shall ask only: *"Domine, doce me facere voluntatem tuam."* [13] To do

[11] "There is no fear in charity."

[12] The "seeds of sin" which are predispositions to evil remaining in us as a result of original sin.

[13] "Lord, teach me to do your will."

the will of God *sicut in coelo,* [14] this is my ardent desire, my only intention and petition in everything that I do, say or think. Only in this way do our souls find rest in the hands of him who created them. In heaven there is no greater joy than to do God's will, and we can also do it here on earth and thus participate in that joy which far surpasses all the delights of the senses. Try it and you will know how sweet is the Lord! He who has tried it but once will now seek nothing else. But what is it that one experiences? Who can describe it? You who know so well how to express the things of God would be able to say something about it. I would like, Father, that you tell me what you experience in your heart and perhaps that would help me to manifest my own to you. When you return, I shall ask you, if I dare.

What I can say is that one experiences a joy, a happiness, which is not of this world, and one is almost tempted to wonder if there could be any greater joy in heaven. One feels strong and big, with a strength and greatness similar to that of God. By means of this strength we can fearlessly wrestle with the angel, as Jacob did, and we shall win. One fears nothing because one is able to do all things; one values nothing highly because he finds himself raised above all created things. If I did not realize that this strength and greatness are from God, that it is he who gives them to me, I would sometimes be astonished at myself. But I am not, because I know well that whatever God communicates of himself to his creatures is much and is little, is great and is small, because he remains forever infinite and eternal. If those who desire power and glory could only know that here alone is all that they desire and seek with such eagerness, and in seeking it elsewhere, they are removed farther and farther from the object of their desires. Seek the blessing where it is, if you wish to find it! O greatness of soul which knows how to restrain all its passions and leaves none of them uncontrolled. David was greater when he refrained from drinking that glass of water than when he conquered the giant Goliath. But where is my mind leading me? I do nothing but exhaust myself in trying to find the words, and still I say nothing. I shall also weary you, Father, with so many words and repetitions. I must interrupt this frequently, because it is difficult for me to be able to write for a half hour at a time. But since I think that our hearts experience the same things, Father, I believe you will understand.

It remains only for me to mention some doubts in regard to the vow about which I was speaking, though you will understand from what I have said that they are not doubts that disturb me or, much less, destroy my peace of soul. No, thanks be to God, I never lose this peace. To do so, I would have to lose God first, and I feel that he is so united to my soul! I shall explain some things in particular and then I shall make some observations about similar matters. God wants me to be very obedient; that is the virtue that he wants me to practice with greatest perfection. He asks that I anticipate the desires of my superiors and fulfill them at once. But the Prioress doesn't want me to suffer anything. If she knows that I am a little indisposed, or have slept but little, she doesn't let me get up for Matins. Then I use a bit of deception so she will not notice, because I do not like to be dispensed from anything. Is that a fault against perfection or obedience, Father? Also, is it a fault to fulfill a desire of the Prioress that is not directed to me, with the result that there is a delay in performing my duties?

Another doubt; I have always been very active by temperament. I like to work and get things done quickly. Yet some time ago the Lord asked me to be more calm, and if I try to do anything quickly, I hear a voice within me say: "Only one thing is necessary." But then I think that if I work less, there will be more work for others.

I have doubts concerning these and similar things, Father. But do not think that I am disturbed by them, not at all. As I said at the start, without any preoccupation, I resolve to do at once what at the moment seems to me the better good. But this does not prevent me from desiring to know for certain

[14] "As in heaven."

what is the better good from anyone who can assure me. Yet I know that you cannot define exactly some of these cases, since many times circumstances differ, and then the case changes, so that one cannot give a fixed rule. One has to judge for oneself in the act itself. Father, do what seems best to you, either to say something about this or to leave everything to the Lord, who does not sleep, but is in my heart and makes his presence felt. Once it seemed that he said to me that I should have no fear, that wherever there is love there are no faults. Love is a fire that converts everything into itself; love turns everything into love.

The more progress I make, the more it seems to me, Father, that my spirit is expanded and runs freely along the great paths of the Lord, where there is nothing but freedom. *Ubi Spiritus Domini, ibi libertas.* [15] Anything that makes the spirit restricted, pusillanimous, cowardly, is not for me. Since the Lord has entrusted my soul to you, Father, I have better understood and appreciated this holy freedom. In God everything is great, and the more one unites himself to God, the more he shares in God's greatness even in this life. In God, how great I see myself; in myself, what an abyss of misery! But the more wretched I see myself, with all the greater force, confidence and love do I cast myself on him.

Thank you, Father, for your thoughtfulness in greeting the Prioress on her feast day. She asks me to thank you in her name and to commend her to your prayers.

We already have permission from the bishop to go to you for confession. When will you come? Asking your blessing,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

[15] "Where the Spirit is, there is freedom."

5.
PRACTICE OF PRAYER

Deusto
September 2, 1922

Dear Father:

It is more than a month since I wrote to you and sent you the article on the Blessed Virgin. While I was waiting to learn whether the letter had reached you, it has seemed good to the Lord to moderate my desire and make me understand better that death to self should accompany all the actions of the soul, which he wants to be his without reserve. Blessed be God and blessed be his holy will which disposes all things for our good. This thought keeps my heart in peace and assures me that anyone who seeks God and his glory will never see his hopes frustrated.

Your letters, Father, seem to come from heaven. I read them again and again, and when I am deprived of them it is the cause of no small sacrifice, especially on this occasion. Sometimes I say: "Lord, have you let me know your servant in order to offer you sacrifices?" Sacrifice is the support of love and my soul thirsts for it more and more. With what rays of light he illumines my soul, who died out of love for me, sacrificed upon the cross!

I must tell you some things, Father, but for the time being I must content myself with saying them to Jesus, peacefully awaiting the hour of the Lord, certain that it will come if it is for my good.

All the days of my life are stamped with prodigies of the goodness of God. This divine Lover has never failed me. Now that he is asking my love with a superhuman force and is drawing me to himself, he will have mercy on his poor spouse who feels the necessity of alleviating the fire that consumes her.

Father, from what I have said you can understand the needs of my soul. I humbly ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
September 10, 1922

Dear Father:

You have told me to write to you whenever I can. I do so willingly; first of all, to obey you, and secondly, because I want you to know well this poor soul that the Lord has entrusted to you.

In regard to obedience, for some time now the Lord has enabled me to understand and practice this virtue. When anything is commanded of me, I know at once that that is the better good, for reasons that God knows, and it is not important that I should know them. I sometimes think that if there could be any excess in the practice of this virtue, I should fear to incur it because of the great joy I feel in obeying blindly. Nevertheless, Father, I want you to know that it is difficult for me to write these things, partly for reasons I do not know, but also because I cannot say things as I wish and as I experience them, though I am confident in the Lord that however I say them, you will understand me very well.

For some months now I do not place my soul beneath the uncreated light of the divine Sun of justice as I used to do, in order to enjoy his ineffable sweetness directly. He it is who accompanies me in the midst of all my duties and enables me to experience the sweetness of sacrifice, revealing to my spirit unknown horizons of sanctity and the knowledge reserved only to sacrifice.

Obedience and charity have required that I spend the hours of prayer in the morning and in the afternoon with the nun who is sick, so that I am free only for the half hour of prayer during the night after Matins and for Mass. In the morning I read to the sick nun some meditations on Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and I prepare her for Holy Communion. She finds it very difficult

to remember things and she needs help. This is the sweet charge that has been given to me. In the afternoon I make a meditation for her on the passion of Jesus, making certain reflections to help her sanctify her suffering. This is a charitable task which I perform joyfully but not without great sacrifice.

All day long my spirit longs for God and yearns for rest; and for me, rest is silence — to remain alone, withdrawn from everything sensible and material. Then, without knowing how or when, one acquires a knowledge which no one else could ever teach. I understand then the nothingness of everything that is not God. I understand that my soul is great because no one can ever fill its emptiness, its immense capacity for containing God. Jesus himself seems to say to me: "I am your way, and the end of this way is in him who has neither name nor form." In the possession of God everything is satisfied; my soul is filled but apart from him, it remains infinitely empty. Only in the possession of God can I truly say: *Haec requies mea in saeculum saeculi.* [1]

Father, you know more about this than I do. I can see this from your articles in the magazine. Your articles and those of Father Victorino Osende [2] are most in accord with what I feel. And how it affects me when I see that what you say is what actually happens in my soul. In the last issue of the magazine, where you speak of God as the soul imagines him and of God who will be given to us without any species or form, you have confirmed the insights that the Lord has given me. God has made me understand that my soul must remain in complete solitude and in isolation from everything sensible, not just now and then, but permanently and perfectly. For the time being Father, I don't know how to say it better; perhaps later I shall be able to do more. What I can say now is that I would gladly be freed of the weight of the body in order to free my spirit.

If I were not speaking to you, I would not dare to say what I say, for fear that someone would say to me: "Those heights are not for you." But I am not afraid to speak this way to you; God has enabled you to understand the love of him who descended from the heights where he dwells and became man in order to lift mankind and carry it to himself. His life, his passion, his death, his redemption, all were directed to this end. Because of the powerful means given to us to attain it, one can realize God's great desire that we should reach it.

I have a very ardent nature; if grace had not moderated it, I don't know what would have become of me. I have always abhorred petty and childish things and have always loved and sought that which is great, beautiful and the better good. And to obtain these things, I have always felt that I have the courage for anything.

If I know that there is a better good, I do not rest until I attain it. With God's grace, I have directed this natural tendency to the search for God because I know that he alone is great. In my travels by land and sea the Lord placed before my eyes the grandeur of nature and I admired it ecstatically. But the majestic grandeur of the sea said to me: "God is even greater"; and the earth, with all its beauty told me that there is a beauty infinitely greater, namely, that of God. I shall not rest until that beauty and grandeur are mine.

But while I wait for the hour in which God will be given to me completely, the Lord, acceding to my desires for greatness, has taught me about a greatness which I can make mine even now — the greatness of virtue — and that true greatness of virtue is found in the little virtues, which are hidden and known only to God. To obey promptly, without showing any repugnance; to anticipate the desires of superiors regardless of one's feelings; to seek in a hidden way the most repugnant and difficult things for oneself; when one feels the urge to say a harsh word, to smile sweetly instead; to do good to one

[1] "This is my rest forever."

[2] Father Victorino Osende, a contemporary of Father Arintero, was also famous in Spain as a writer on spiritual subjects, a retreat master and a spiritual director. Two of his works have been published in English by B. Herder Book Company of St. Louis: *Fruits of Contemplation* and *Pathways of Love.*

who has given us reason for irritation; to be silent when one feels the pinch of poverty, especially in regard to food and clothing — this, Father, is the greatness that I seek now. This is what gives me the strength to wait with patience until that other greatness is given to me, namely, God without measure, totally and forever.

Excuse this digression, but it seemed necessary so that you would be able to form an exact judgment concerning my prayer. For if in order to know whether the prayer is good, it is necessary to examine the practical effects it produces, then I must tell you these things so that you can judge. And since I have diverted from the track, permit me to say something else before I take up the thread again on the matter of prayer. Years ago, when I did not yet have the light which the Lord in his goodness now gives me concerning spiritual things, I already received many graces from God, but I did not appreciate them as they deserved because I did not recognize them. It did not seem necessary to consider them, much less to speak about them to a spiritual director. Once, while I was still in the world, in order to dispel a fear that I had, my confessor said to me: "I assure you that you have never committed a mortal sin or even a venial sin, because the things you have done were the result of inconstancy or lack of knowledge." At the time I could not believe what he said, because it seemed to me that I had offended God many times; but now I think differently.

I find it much more profitable for my soul to believe blindly in this great mercy of God and in many others, to appreciate them and show my gratitude by dedicating myself with all my strength to reach sanctity. Sometimes I have encountered confessors who, when I tell them of the mercy that God has shown me, immediately say something to humiliate me, thus showing that they were afraid I would become proud. When this happened, I wanted to laugh, but out of respect I remained silent and listened to them. However, within myself I would think that instead of being afraid, they would have done better to examine whether or not this was a grace of the Lord. If it wasn't a grace, they could ignore it; but if it was a grace, they should not have been concerned about pride on my part, since there is nothing that so humbles a soul as the grace of God. Nothing makes me understand better my own nothingness, my incapacity for good, as when the Lord keeps me closely united to himself. That is clear.

God is truth. In him we see all things in truth, and the truth is that we are nothing and God is all. We are even less than nothing, because sin remains in us. Yes, sin is ours alone and even the lightest sin that we could commit, gives ample cause to humble us for the rest of our life. This can be seen so clearly with God's light that it is the danger that I fear least of all. Consequently, convinced that all good is from God, if I see any good in myself, I see also that it is from God. As a result, I feel grateful to him and I love him more. I have told you this, Father, so that without any false fear you can always help me recognize the graces of the Lord and not disdain them.

St. Teresa says, I think, that to receive graces from the Lord, to know that one receives them, and to know how to explain them are three distinct graces. A person may receive all three, or it may happen that he receives only the first, or only the first and the second. I have understood the distinction between these three graces, and I know that I have received the first and the second from the Lord. As to the third grace, you will know better than I whether I have received it. What I can say — and this applies to what I told you previously — is that since I received the second grace — that of knowing the graces of the Lord and appreciating them — I seem to have progressed much more in the service of God. But Father, how much I have lost formerly in not knowing what God has done in me and what I ought to do for him. Nor do I agree that one should not tell the spiritual director about the favors of the Lord out of fear of pride. With God's grace, I shall not act that way because I think it is even more necessary to tell these things than to mention one's faults, so that the spiritual director can guide the soul. Thus, Father, we

understand each other on this point once and for all.

Now I would like to return to the subject of prayer, but another thought comes to mind and I should state it before I forget. When I tell you that I have received and am still receiving many graces from the Lord, I do not want you to think that I am speaking of extraordinary exterior graces which the saints receive. No, I am not speaking of these; if I were to receive them, I would tell you.

The path by which the Lord leads me is very smooth and simple, much more simple than some persons in this house believe. From certain words that escape them, I conclude that they believe there is something extraordinary about me. No, Father, my life is very ordinary; and my whole desire is to perfect myself more each day in those things which everybody does. The graces that the Lord has given me and is still giving me are of another type. They are all interior graces, things so intimate and spiritual that I can scarcely tell you what they are. I shall try to say something about them, certain that you will understand me.

They are interior calls from God which keep me always in his presence more or less intensely. They are interior voices, without words, by which his love invites me to sanctity. In this respect, I shall tell you one way the Lord enlightens me in times of doubt and is a great help. Sometimes I seem to hear the Lord ask me: "Would you like to read in the lives of the saints that they did this or that thing?" And if I know that I would not, I immediately hear him say in me: "Neither must you do it."

Another grace of God is peace — the peace and serenity of spirit which are habitually in my soul together with a light for the intellect to disdain everything temporal and passing, and to appreciate and esteem what is eternal: God, goodness, virtue, my soul. The ardor that I experience continually consumes my heart, although sometimes I wondered if I was deceived, whether or not it was the fire of Jesus. But immediately I would know that no other fire can burn so sweetly as the fire that consumed the precious life of him who died for me on the cross. Father, when I consider so many graces in my soul, I never forget my union with the Mother of grace, the Queen of heaven, who can dispense all the riches of God and is at the same time my sweetest Mother who loves her poor daughter with an infinite love. Mary is mistress of my heart and I carry her sweet name inscribed on my heart and I shall carry it with me to eternity so that it will be my glory forever and ever. This should not surprise you, for it is only natural that what belongs to such a Lady should be adorned with grace and beauty.

Since the Lord has granted me the light to understand the value of these graces, I can say that they are far superior to the graces of working miracles, prophecy, visions, ecstasy, etc. When I hear anyone speak of these favors, I rejoice that God has granted them to others, but immediately I think: "Lord, I thank you that without such gifts I shall be able to become a saint like them, and even more, for it seems to me that souls that walk on this path love you more intensely and become saints more quickly." How pleasing this sanctity is to Jesus! If I could only explain to souls that yearn to be saints how little they need and how little Jesus asks of them to be able to press them to his Sacred Heart.

I would like to end by speaking of prayer and leave for another letter the things that the Lord has enabled me to understand about the obstacles which prevent so many souls from becoming saints. Returning to my practice of prayer — what I told you at the start about my soul resting, without doing anything, is most usual with me, but it is not that way always or during the whole period of prayer. I am sometimes distracted, although distractions come and go without causing me any disturbance. I could almost say that I hardly advert to them. My will is united with God and no one can separate it from him. It is a fortress which no one can penetrate and Jesus is its master. I have given him the key and no one but he can enter. I can be confident that it is well guarded, though formerly it was not so. When distractions came, I

would be disturbed and annoyed and fear that I had not done all I could to reject them. In this way I lost that complete quietude of spirit which is so necessary for conversing with God and understanding and fulfilling his divine wishes.

Then, in aridity and coldness of spirit, in the lack of sensible affections, what should a Passionist nun do? Run to the water and the fire — to the fire of love and the sea of sorrow. For her, in a special way, the Passion of Jesus is where this fire burns so that she can fulfill her noble mission of warming, inflaming and enriching her soul and the souls of others. The compass that guides me in all the ways on which the Holy Spirit wishes to guide me is the Passion of Jesus. It is by this sea that my soul reaches the shore of rest in the bosom of God.

I always try to have some particular point prepared, finding in the Passion of Jesus all that my soul needs, especially strength and constancy in sacrifice, peace and joy in humiliation. When meditating on certain points, the Lord gives me particular sentiments of compassion and sorrow, so that they more readily move my heart. I concentrate on these points and if I cannot do anything else, I unite my sufferings with those of Jesus and consecrate to them the love and compassion of the tender heart of my Mother Mary.

It has frequently happened to me that when I have spent the day closely united with the Lord and am anxious for the hour of prayer to arrive [3] in order to give myself completely to the heart of Jesus, when the hour arrives, all my ardor and longing disappear; I experience a weakness of body and a kind of sickness; I seem to be under a heavy weight. Then I offer my sufferings to Jesus and I say everything to him in one word: love. Because of the peace I experience in my soul, I know that God is there, but in a way that I cannot explain. There seems to be a kind of separation, with God on one side and Magdalen, alone, on the other. I was somewhat surprised at this change, and I wanted you to tell me what this means, since I did not understand it. But then the Lord himself made me understand why he did this.

I am a child, and Jesus treats me that way. He feared that I would weep and therefore he explained his manner of working. He keeps no secrets from me, but tells everything to his poor spouse. He wants me to see what I am and what I could be without him; therefore he effects a kind of separation so that I will realize my incapacity for all things and will experience my own nothingness. At the same time, he makes me understand that he is within me whenever I feel fervor, strength and power, and that I should always be properly disposed; but from one moment to another he can take everything away, and therefore I should be strong in faith and love and not attached to sensible things. And as regards selecting the time of prayer and not some other time, it is so I can consider all this better, since during the day, when my senses are occupied with external things, I could not understand as well these intentions of the Lord, who does everything for my good that I may live always in the truth. My natural physical state is one of weakness, and when the Lord suspends or diminishes the sensible attractions, then I know that it is the love of Jesus that gives me strength to do everything, and not the strength of my own body.

I want to tell you, Father, what Father Germain said to my mother shortly before I entered the convent. It is relevant to what I have been saying. When my mother asked him, "How will my daughter, who is nothing but skin and bones, ever be able to wear this heavy habit?" (I was very thin), Father Germain replied: "Within that skin and bones there is a heart that loves God very much." How many times these words of that holy servant of God have served me as an instruction! He did not measure the weight of penance by one's physical strength, but by love; and how true this is. How much more we could do if we had more love. Love gives us courage to carry the yoke of the Lord. And this, I repeat, has enabled me on many occasions to pay no attention to the weakness of my body, but to realize I do not serve God

[3] The second period of mental prayer in the evening.

because of the help my body gives me, but by the love and grace of the Lord.

Yes, Father, love makes everything easy, and more than anything else, the practice of prayer. Prayer is such an urgent need for anyone who loves God that he cannot find anything else to replace it. And if for any reasonable cause, such as the one I have told you I now have, [4] he has to leave it, he seeks God in everything he does and he finds him. How good the Lord is to souls that seek him and how he lets himself be found in all places!

This grace also the Lord grants me: I find him immediately, without any preparation. If I have to interrupt my prayer, as sometimes happens, when I return to it I find the Lord again without any need to recollect myself. You will say: "This daughter tells me of nothing but joys and consolations, but Jesus offers only the cross and suffering to those who follow him. What is this?" I shall explain, Father. It is true that my life is joyful and a continuous feast day, but this joy and this feast day have produced in me the continual sacrifice and death of myself. I can tell you this truly: I constantly immolate myself to Jesus externally, and internally Jesus immolates and consumes me with his holy love. May your love, O Jesus, give me death!

I believe, Father, that for now I have told you enough about my practice of prayer. It is so simple that there is not very much to say. It is the prayer of little souls, because everything about me is little, except my love. I do not want my love to be little; I want it to be great, very great. When God takes me in his arms, I give myself to him at once, without thinking of my unworthiness or smallness; and when he doesn't, I take the steps I can and remain at peace.

Asking your blessing,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

[4] The care of the sick nun prevented Mother Magdalen from assisting at many community exercises, including the morning and evening periods of mental prayer.

6.
LOVE AND SANCTITY

Deusto
September 20, 1922

Dear Father:

I would like to write a great deal in order to obey your command to write as much as I can, but right now, because of caring for the sick nun, I have less time. The poor thing calls for me frequently and in order to please her I leave everything. The Passionist nun sees her crucified Spouse in those who are sick in bed and is eager to apply soothing ointment of compassion on those wounds of love. How greatly charity pleases Jesus!

I wish now to speak to you about this queen of the virtues. Then you will be able better to help me perfect myself in the virtues as Jesus wishes. In the measure that the love of God increases in the heart, charity must also increase. The sentiments which the Lord gives me in regard to this virtue are very great indeed. I don't know if I shall be able to express them, Father, because some aspects are so delicate and some depths so profound that one needs light from God in order to understand them.

Some years ago I was afraid of going to excess in the practice of this virtue, but the Lord has now removed all fear from me. For example, when I knew that one of the nuns was acting deceitfully or was doing something for selfish ends, I thought it was an act of charity to correct her sweetly and make her realize that this manner of acting deprived her of much good. But now that the Lord enlightens me, I understand that there is another more charitable way that is more effective because it is more gentle and more like the charity of the heart of him who did not look the adulterous woman in the face, in order not to embarrass her — to instruct without correcting. One does this as if not noticing a person's faults, but simply explains the matter from the aspect of greater perfection, and then says that if one does not act in this way it is through lack of advertence and, when all is considered, practically nothing is lost because one learns from experience and can be more careful the next time. In this way the person who has done wrong or was selfish is humbled and confounded when she enters into herself, but this is something only between herself and God. The correction is thus much more gentle and profitable because it is God himself who gives it.

Jesus wants virtue to be taught by virtue and not by words alone, which often do nothing more than disturb the spirit which is not disposed for the grace of God. In fact, one can never dispose himself for God's grace by his own efforts, however learned and holy he may be.

Jesus made me understand that if one acts this way there is no danger of excess, that is, of being too indulgent or too severe, and even if there were, there is no danger for a religious, because obedience makes everything safe. The subject must practice charity without restriction, without limit, without measure, at the cost of any sacrifice and of life itself. I feel, Father, that only now do I begin to understand the immense extension of this virtue. The grandeur of things can be seen only in the light of Jesus; and Jesus, who desires that the heart of his poor spouse should be like his own, illumines it with the rays of his infinite charity.

When I entered the convent, the confessor once asked me if I had committed any faults against charity. I told him no; that I had never confessed this sin. How little light I had then! If anyone were to ask me now, I would not dare to give such a definitive reply. Father, until uncreated light illumines the soul, how much darkness obscures it. I know this from experience. How I suffer because of the faults, defects, sins, physical and moral sickness of others! In the sick I see Jesus himself; as he said of himself: *"Infirmus eram . . . "* [1] Of this there is no doubt. To stimulate myself to greater compas-

[1] A reference to Matthew 25:36, "I was sick and you visited me . . . ."

sion of charity, I consider this truth as follows: Jesus, infinite beauty, is the most beautiful of all the sons of men. Everything ugly, depressing, repugnant, that I see in sickness, I consider as the fruit of sin, as something of my own. In the same way I consider these things in Jesus when, during his passion, he was covered with filth and spittle, realizing that I have cast all that opprobrium on his divine person. Looking at the sick person in this way, I feel more compassion and charity, seeing in her the beauty of Jesus disfigured by our sins. I do not know, Father, if I have expressed this idea very well, but it helps me very much in overcoming my natural repugnance and in serving the sick nuns with love. Whatever helps the practice of this virtue must be used with profit, because it is of great benefit for eternity. Jesus Christ assures us of this in the Gospel by making it all depend on charity, whether or not one will hear the words: *"Venite, benedicti . . . ."* [2]

The refinements of this great virtue are all those small things which cannot be described or taught. Only those who live in union with him who spent his life doing good for others can know how to use these occasions with benefit and how to practice these things. Sometimes one must hide one's feelings; at other times, one must intervene by speaking or remaining silent, by a gesture, a smile, or a certain expression on one's face. Without these little refinements this beautiful virtue is like a jewel that does not glitter and therefore it lacks the attractiveness and enchantment proper to charity.

At this point I imagine you will say: "Everything you are saying and thinking in praise of this virtue is good and it can never be too much; but what I want to know is not only your ideas about charity, but how you practice it." If this is the way you are thinking, you are right. When it is a question of virtue and sanctity, talk is of little value; they demand works and perseverance. Consequently, I shall very willingly tell you how I practice it or how it seems to me that I do. What is certain is that it is always easier to understand and speak about things than to do them; but an intense desire for them very often facilitates the practice as well. Even in human affairs, it is customary to say that to will is to do; and this is much more true of sanctity, since we have God with us.

My desires are very great because I wish to practice this virtue with the perfection that Jesus asks of me. But for now it seems that this perfection is measured by the sentiments which he gives me as I have already explained to you. The promptness with which Jesus corrects even my small faults against charity and the ease with which I practice this virtue make me hope that with the grace of the Lord I shall continue to perfect myself more and more.

Three years ago the Lord permitted the following incident to occur in regard to this virtue. I suffered a little, and even more than a little; but I was at peace because the suffering was good for my soul and was a valuable lesson. Besides, whatever the Lord does is an impulse of his infinite love for us his creatures. One day when I went to confession the confessor told me that in a particular situation of which I had spoken, I had failed in charity. On hearing this, I was greatly surprised, but not as regards my failure, since I know very well that I am capable of committing all kinds of faults. What surprised and saddened me was to have committed such an obvious fault without realizing it. Dear God, I thought, what kind of a conscience do I have? I have made the vow of greater perfection and I commit a sin like that without being aware of it. I accused myself of the matter as it stood in the eyes of God; I asked forgiveness and begged the confessor to give me a good penance.

Several weeks passed in which I did nothing but ask for the Lord's mercy. Even at night, when I awoke the thought came to me that I had offended God. On another day, when speaking with the confessor of this same matter, I confessed it again. The pain that I felt, only God knows; but the Prioress must have noticed, because she asked me what was the matter and I told her

[2] "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

the reason for my sadness. The next time we had confessions the Prioress explained the truth of the matter to the priest. He then told me that he had been misinformed or had misunderstood; I had not committed a fault on that occasion and could therefore be at peace.

Father, I would not want you to think that the confessor was severe with me or that he was credulous. There was nothing of that. He knew my great obligations to God and was helping me fulfill them. Moreover, I was accustomed to ask the confessors to tell me my faults and they promised to do so. Consequently, he did no more than his duty. Would that all confessors would do this, without any fear of displeasing their penitents. You cannot imagine, Father, how many times this happens and I consider it a great grace of the Lord to be instructed this way.

This incident helped me to be more careful in the practice of charity. I understood how wonderful it is to be silent in imitation of Jesus when by a single word one could rectify the bad opinion others have formed of us. I learned how to be prudent in speaking to confessors, because a single careless word can cause great suffering to a soul. Yet I did not think evilly of anyone, for I considered that it had been permitted by the Lord for my own good, and there was no fault on either side. May God deign to make me worthy of receiving these graces more often.

As regards the area of action which the virtue of charity provides, the concerns the Lord gives me are very great: the salvation of souls, their sanctification, that those who are called children of God may be so in truth, that God be loved as he desires by each one. What a great area is presented to me in which I see that I am called to work like the father of a family. The sanctification of souls — this seems to be my special mission on earth and in heaven. If only, with the light God gives me, I could make all souls desirous of sanctity see this, but they become discouraged because they think that sanctity is very difficult to attain. How little God asks of the soul that is disposed to seek it without fear! How little is lacking to many souls to be able to reach the summit of the holy mountain! But how to disabuse many souls of the idea that something extraordinary is required to become saints! To convince them, I would like to erase everything extraordinary in the lives of the saints, confident that in so doing I would not take away their sanctity, since it was not the extraordinary that sanctified them, but the practice of virtue which we can all achieve with the help and grace of the Lord.

Father, am I wrong? If so, you will know and you will tell me; but it seems that my brother, St. Gabriel, tells me that I am not deceived. Everything in his life was ordinary, simple and small in appearance, and yet what a great saint he became in a short time.

It surprises me greatly, Father, and I hope you will let me say this, that in your magazine, which is directed entirely to promote the sanctification of souls, you do not give preference in the section on the lives of holy persons to those saints of a simple life, who have done no more than love God with fidelity in the duties of their state in life. This is all the more necessary now, when sanctity is badly understood, and only the extraordinary arouses interest. But one who seeks the extraordinary has very little chance of becoming a saint.

How many souls never reach sanctity because they do not proceed by the path on which they are called by God. I even dare to add that those who desire to be saints and do not know for certain the path by which the Lord wants to lead them, should embrace this path of fidelity to their obligations. This is their way; this is where the Lord wants them; this is where they can easily be sanctified, because what the Lord asks of the soul is love, and love does all things sweetly. It is in this area, Father, that I think I must work, and you also, for if the Lord has brought us together, he has done it for some purpose. In God everything is providential; nothing happens by chance; everything is under his infinite wisdom. May God grant that we do not op-

pose his wishes. This, Father, is my mission: to make souls realize how simple and easy sanctity is.

Perhaps I shall not be able to do anything more on earth than offer God the desires that consume my heart; but in heaven I hope to fulfill my mission perfectly. There, united with my mother Mary, I shall sprinkle the living water on many souls so that there may blossom in them the flowers which the divine Gardener is seeking — the flowers of the little virtues exalted by the rose of love. When from heaven I see a heart desirous of sanctity, I shall hasten to show it sanctity in all its simplicity, so that no one will be discouraged, but all without exception will generously embark on this path. Now I don't know how to speak or write or explain these things, but in heaven I shall know how to make myself understood and I shall also fulfill a desire that I have experienced many times — to be a director of souls in order to teach them how to find God within themselves; to perceive his voice (that voice which they already hear but do not recognize); to make them know the graces of the Lord and how much Jesus loves them, certain that they will give their love in return and will abandon themselves to him without any fear; to teach them to love Mary, the Mother of love, and to become little children to be carried in her arms.

I shall not say to anyone that in order to sanctify themselves it is necessary to do violence to themselves, to suffer a great deal, or to carry a heavy cross. To say this before love has taken over as master of their heart would discourage them. Rather, I shall tell them how much God loves them and I shall show them how to be aware of that love and of how much God does through them. In this way they will love God, and love will teach them everything. I am aware that Christ told us that the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence and only those who do violence will enter; and I know that he offers the cross to anyone who wants to follow him. But these words, coming from the divine lips of eternal love, from the mercy of God incarnate, cannot be as difficult and harsh as they appear at first glance. And if we understand them that way, it is because we do not understand them correctly. We would do better to concentrate on those other words: "My yoke is sweet, my burden is light." I think that until we find the yoke of the Lord sweet and light, in the full extension of the word, as he, truth by essence, has told us it is, we have not yet discovered the true way of bearing it.

That those who are still bound by the chains of sin must do violence to themselves in order to emerge from their sad state, and that the cross is heavy to all those who have not as yet tasted the sweetness of divine love is not surprising. But those who have already given themselves to the Lord, as is the case with the souls of which I now speak, such is not their condition. He who desires to love, already loves; and for one who loves, everything is sweet. There is no violence in love, for everything is sweet and gentle; and love carries the one who loves to the cross.

How much I have lost in the past, Father, when in the practice of virtue I was told that it was necessary to do violence to myself, always to be vigilant over myself, and to examine minutely what I had done and what I ought to do. If, instead of this, I had concentrated on his teachings, his example, his love, the tenderness of his love for me, and if I had considered the beauty of his sanctity and perfection, I would have recognized at once my own ugliness, and whatever in me was opposed to that sanctity, and I would have amended my life more quickly and more gently.

I repeat, Father, if in heaven God grants me, as I desire, to be a director of souls, I only want to teach them love; that they concentrate very little on themselves, thinking of their misery and their faults; that they should not be preoccupied with themselves, whether they are good or bad; that they fix their attention on Jesus alone, on his goodness, his love; that they read spiritual books that treat of this. Then I am sure that all their defects and sins will soon disappear because the fire of love will consume everything. Understood in this way, Father, is it not true that there is nothing violent in sanc-

tity? I shall say it a million times: if we truly wish to be saints, it is more a question of joy than of suffering. And how beautiful sanctity is when considered in this way!

Sanctity is nothing else but making ourselves like God, and to do this it is necessary to study him, concentrate on him and not on ourselves. Sanctity belongs to the house of God, and our souls are living houses of God, wherein he loves to dwell. I would like to offer Jesus as many of these temples as I can, so that he may be where he said that he finds his delight, namely, "with the children of men." And in order that St. Paul of the Cross will not correct me as he did a bishop, when he said: "He who does not take care of the house of his own person, how can he take care of the house of God?" I shall begin with my own soul, and when I have made it into a permanent dwelling-place for the Lord, I shall do all things else easily.

Do not think, Father, that these desires are a passing sentiment that readily come and go. No, I have had them for a long time. I first conceived them at the foot of the crucifix. In those wounds I can see what a price was paid for souls, and how many treasures are lost because souls do not go to those fountains of love. It seems to me that Jesus himself has engraved these obligations on my soul with his precious blood. There is where I experience a burning desire to do for souls what Jesus did. But I am not content simply with saving souls or converting sinners; that is too little for such great love. Jesus wants them to be saints; he wants to press them closely to his heart and give them the tender kiss of love; he is not content with only the kiss of forgiveness.

Will I succeed in this, Father? I hope so. I hope to be able to give a saint to the church. St. Gemma said: "Jesus never inspires a soul with desires that cannot be realized." But it is certain that this desire has been awakened in me, is that not true, Father? It will be a great consolation to me if you can reassure me; not that I doubt it, but because I do not trust in myself and I am ready to abandon all my ideas if you believe that they do not come from the Lord.

I think now that you would like to know what I do in order to promote these great ideas that inspire me. I have told you, and shall do so again: I do nothing more than try to perfect myself more and more each day in the things that everybody does; seek sacrifices that I can offer to Jesus in the secret of my heart and with a smile on my lips, give kisses to Jesus.

I would like, Father, to tell you my sentiments concerning the practice of giving kisses to Jesus. Our holy rule commands that while we are working in our cells, we should frequently bestow fervent kisses on the wounds of Jesus crucified, whom we always have before our eyes. How sweet for me is this point of our holy rule. Jesus asks kisses of me in order to return them to me with an increase of love. Sometimes I imagine that he asks them of me in order to show mercy to some poor sinner who is in agony, for some sheep of his flock that has strayed, for some soul that greatly fears his justice because it rarely considered his love. I also give Jesus some of these kisses for you, Father. Yes, Jesus asks kisses of me for all those who work for the salvation of souls. I am bestowing kisses on Jesus while they, by their work, are carrying out my desires, namely, that the love of Jesus be known and souls be sanctified. In order that my kisses may move the heart of Jesus, I ask my mother Mary to give me her most pure lips so that with them I can kiss Jesus. To give a kiss is a small thing, but love makes it very great. This for now is my work, until the eternal day dawns wherein I shall be able to teach souls the secret of these kisses. All I can say for now is that the kiss is love and that love teaches everything and does everything. In order that God will hear my desires, I have composed a prayer which I shall recite frequently if you approve of it. I shall put it at the end of this letter.

When with God's light I consider the numerous good souls, especially in religious life, who truly love God, work for him unceasingly, save souls, live a life of constant sacrifice for the love of God and, in a word, seem to do

everything to sanctify their souls and serve God but, when one approaches them, one does not find in them the spirit of those few souls who have been admitted to the intimacy of the love of Jesus and have tasted of his love — I find myself before a mystery which I must leave for eternity. But one day the Lord made me understand the reason, which afflicts Jesus and prevents him from filling with the treasures of his love those souls that he loves so much. I shall set down the points I composed for my use on the very day that Jesus clarified this for me.

This morning, after Communion, Jesus revealed clearly how much it saddened him to see what little attention many souls give to his tender and loving invitation to sanctity. For many of them little is lacking to become saints so that Jesus can communicate to them his divine treasures. Jesus offers them his hands filled with gifts, but they do not recognize the gift of God. They close their eyes and they do not reach out their hands in order to be enriched. Others need a little more abandonment to his hands; they need to close their eyes and not be afraid of God, who is love, and everything he does and desires is love. And there are also those who are excessively concerned about themselves; they live in a state of preoccupation about what would be harmful to their health or what would be good for them, and this alienates them from God and from the practice of mortification. If they do mortify themselves, they let everybody know, while love, on the contrary, demands that they seek out little sacrifices and keep them hidden like a precious treasure. And there are others, finally, and I think these are a majority, who fail to perfect themselves in the virtue of obedience.

The commands and desires of superiors should be followed blindly and promptly. The majority of good souls obey in big things and in the ordinary things, but they neglect certain small matters that Jesus asks of them in order to make progress in the work of their sanctification. Jesus asks perfection of all in this virtue, more than in other virtues. Though they may be persons of advanced age or worthy of respect because of their office, merits or talents, such as superiors, missionaries, priests, etc., Jesus asks the same perfection of all in this virtue, because this one more than any other enables us to become children so that he can take us in his arms.

Another thing which prevents progress in sanctity for many souls is lack of fidelity in small things. They may do everything and do it well, but frequently the careful attention that should be given to some things is given to others. One takes little liberties when the freedom of sanctity consists in being always attached to the will of God. All these souls have done and are doing everything possible to become saints, but by neglecting these little things, which with practice become sweet and easy, and prepare souls for the practice of the great virtues, they are left behind; they renounce sanctity and always live an ordinary life. What a shame! Dear Jesus, what a shame! My mother Mary, teach them all! Sanctity is the greatest and most important thing they can achieve, but it is lost, forfeited because of things of little importance.

I shall do all I can to console the heart of Jesus for the many souls who ignore his invitation of love and his repeated call to sanctity. My mission on earth and in heaven must be to pray for the sanctification of souls. All labors and sufferings will be directed to the extension of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the conversion of sinners, the combat against the enemies of the Church, and the increase of the children of God. The Lord has commended these things to other souls, but he has commissioned me in a special way to give saints to the Church, to make souls heed his invitation to sanctity, that many souls realize how little is lacking to them to become saints and how easy is the path to sanctity. I shall pray to God every day for this; I shall offer to him whatever good I do — penances and sacrifices, all that he asks of me and even life itself. How happy I would be if I could give my life for the sanctification of even one soul; but no, I would not be content with one soul; I desire the sanctification of many.

In the introduction of our holy rule it says: "The goal of Passionist religious is to tend to the perfection of divine love by meditation on the life, passion and death of Jesus crucified on Calvary for the redemption of the world, and to strive that these ineffable mysteries of love be known by all so that all will love them." Does it not seem to you, Father, that my desires are in conformity with my vocation?

The rule says nothing of converting sinners, saving souls, of combatting the enemies of the Church. Our direct mission is to love God and to make him loved. I know that indirectly this goal comprises other things as well, but this is the principle one. To this goal therefore I dedicate myself. I want to work in this vast area which the Lord offers me, and since no one can stop love, no one can impede my work, which I hope will last until my death, when I pray that God will grant me the grace to make an act of perfect love so that he can take me directly to heaven to continue my mission there.

On ending this letter, Father, I have one fear. Who knows whether out of ignorance or because of not understanding the meaning of certain words or the force of certain expressions, I may have said something contrary to the teaching of the Church? If this be so, I beg you, for the love of God, that you immediately destroy these letters in which I have tried only to obey you.

I hope that you will be so kind, when you can, to give me a written answer to all that I have said. Ever prompt to obey, with the help of God's grace, whatever you command, I remain your affectionate daughter.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Prayer for the Sanctification of Souls

O God, out of infinite love for your creatures and a desire to unite them to yourself, fountain of all sanctity and perfection, you have commanded through your divine Son and our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, that we should be holy and perfect as you are. In the name of your Son, through the labors of his mortal life, especially his bitter passion and death, through his condition as a permanent Victim of the most holy Sacrament of the altar, and through the love you have for most holy Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, the greatest saint of all God's creatures, whom you have constituted as dispenser of all the graces of heaven, illumine our souls with your sovereign light so that we may all know that whatever our state and condition, all of us without exception can attain the perfection you ask of us.

Grant us to understand that it is your will that all of us be saints, and that we may attain this, inflame in us a burning desire to be so, to study and to know your beauty, your goodness and mercy, your infinite love for each soul. We are certain that through these considerations we shall love you, and since love produces likeness, we shall also soon conform our lives with that of our divine model, Jesus Christ our Lord, thus fulfilling your sovereign will that all of us be saints. To this end, each time that we say in the Our Father, "thy will be done," we have the intention of renewing this petition (that we trust will be heard promptly) that we shall see blossom in the mystical garden of the Church many flowers of sanctity, to the confusion of your enemies, for the edification of good souls, and for your greater glory. Amen.

P.S. I hope that many will recite this prayer, especially in religious communities. I think it would be very pleasing to the Lord.

Asking your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

7.
VOW OF LOVE FOR JESUS

Deusto
September 30, 1922

Dear Father:

With what force Jesus asks for my heart's love! This morning, as soon as I awoke, love took possession of me. It has accompanied me in everything that I have done; it draws me with a sweet power and it causes me to suffer and to rejoice. I am wearing the penitential band in honor of the Blessed Mother (today is Saturday) and I have asked her for love, saying repeatedly: "Mary, my Mother, I love you." It seems that when Jesus enters my heart in Communion on Saturdays, all the tenderness of my love for our Lady is renewed. What a strange sensation — one feels as if inflamed and at the same time one does not know how to ask nor can one ask for anything else but fire, that same fire which is the cause of the ardor that consumes us. That is why I know that it is the fire of Jesus, nourished by the flames from his Sacred Heart.

When I receive him into my heart, I say to him: "Oh Jesus, are you not moved to compassion at my pain? Do you not see how much I suffer and that you are the cause of my suffering?" But Jesus replies: "Do you love me?" I don't know what else to say to him except, "I desire love." And then it seems to me that he smiles.

I don't know how long a person can remain in this state. It seems to me that one must either die or go forward. To continue this way is impossible. What do you think, Father? If you can tell me what this is that I am experiencing, I shall be very content. I would like to explain it to you but I cannot. What do other souls say to you when they experience these things? The only thing I can say is that the love of Jesus is inexplicable; it contains mysteries which would require an eternity to explain. A person who does not experience it, will not believe it; therefore it is better to say nothing. And Father, I do not tell anyone the things I tell you.

If you only knew how much love Jesus asks of me! Not only now, but for a long time he has been asking for my whole heart; but how imperfectly I have loved him up to now. Jesus was waiting patiently for the hour in which, by his divine light, he could reveal to my soul horizons undreamed of and could make me understand that if I am faithful, much more remains for me to understand in this world before I reach the beatific light.

Now Father, I am going to copy the formula of the vow of love of Jesus which I wanted to write with blood, but Father Germain would not permit me. He told me that these words (which were inspired in me by the Lord) were words of fire that had greater value than the blood in my veins.

VOW OF LOVE FOR JESUS

October 11, 1908

Oh, Jesus, my only good and my all! Infinite are the graces that I have received from you, and infinite also are my obligations to you, especially for having delivered me from the Egypt of the world and drawn me to your holy house. Poor creature that I am, what shall I do for you, my Jesus? I shall ask love, promising to love you always with my whole soul, with my whole heart, and above all things. Yes, Jesus, my God and my all, I thank you and I accept the commandment that you have given me to love you, obliging myself from this moment to observe it under vow. Each day my heart experiences more strongly, my Jesus, the necessity to love. Apart from you, every other love is vain. To you, then, my God, from this day forward, I consecrate all my affections and all my aspirations. If for one moment I were to experience any affection that is not entirely yours, a moment before that, grant that I may die for love of you. O Jesus, the thought of not having loved you always and of having offended you at any time afflicts me greatly. The love with which I

now desire to love you, which is to love you as much as you deserve to be loved, compensates for the time in which I did not love you. The vow that I now make will be perfected in heaven, when I shall be compelled by sweet necessity to love you for all eternity.

Accept this vow, my Jesus, which I offer to you through the hands of the most blessed Mary, so that through her intercession it will be pleasing to you and will obtain for me the helps necessary to fulfill it perfectly and to be able one day to die of love in her arms. Amen. Jesus and Mary, bless your Mary Magdalen.

(I carry this written on my heart and have the intention of renewing this vow with every beat of my heart, so that the last heartbeat will be an act of love that will carry me to heaven.)

Deusto
October 20, 1922

Dear Father:

I am sending you with this letter the article which I told you I had started before your visit. [1] For the moment I cannot send you the completed article.

Thank you, Father, and may Jesus reward you for all that you are doing for my poor soul and for your kindness in bringing me the two copies of the magazine and the other one, which was read in the refectory. Everybody was pleased because it spoke of our beloved Mother.

During recreation we are accustomed to speak about what was read in refectory. On the day that they read the article, "Association of Love," I remained silent, observing what the others were saying and the impression it made on them. It was well received, thanks be to God. The more humble the instruments God uses, the more resplendent the wisdom of him who uses them.

I think, Father, that your two visits have helped me greatly so that the Lord may increase his grace and love in my soul.

I willingly accepted a slight feeling of illness in your presence, an illness that is good for me. [2] It seems that the Lord permitted it in order to give to us a proof that he is with us. His minister was speaking to me of God's love, and Jesus made me experience this love, and I rejoiced in it. The same thing has happened to me at other times, but I exercise great control and no one notices it. But in your presence, Father, since I have no feeling of embarrassment, I did not attempt to conceal it.

When Jesus acts this way with you, what do you do? At times the thought has come to me that he confers these graces on others and also on you in order to provide the strength necessary for working for the sanctification of souls. But if one does not have time even to rest for a little while when one feels ill, what is one to do? How powerful is the love of Jesus! For some days after you had gone, the Lord continued to keep me closely united to his love. At such times I have no desire to eat, to sleep, or to speak. Everything becomes burdensome to me when I feel that I am possessed by divine love. When shall we be able only to love? Not in this life, where love makes us sometimes leave Love. [3]

Pardon me if I relate a difficulty that I have encountered in doing what you told me to do by way of separating and amplifying the material in the articles

[1] One of the reasons why there are so few letters by Father Arintero is that his frequent visits to the Passionist monastery enabled him to discuss in person the affairs of Mother Mary Magdalen and to answer her questions.

[2] The "illness" referred to here is a languor or kind of swooning which Mother Mary Magdalen experienced when she was very closely united with Christ or when God flooded her soul with love and divine light.

[3] This statement is commonly found in the writings of mystics. Since it is impossible in this life to love God continually with all the intensity of one's love, the mystics understand their need to attend to their duties out of love but that makes it necessary for them to turn their attention from the Beloved.

that I gave you. Please do not think that it is because I do not wish to do it. That is not the reason; rather, I fear that I shall not be able to do it as you wish. I cannot state things simply and without any retouching as I have done up to now. I do this when I speak alone with you; but knowing that others will read what I write, it seems that they will eventually identify the author, although I give no indication; and for this reason I do not dare to say some things. I cannot express what I feel in my heart and I have to hold myself back for fear that I will become known. In a word, Father, I don't know how to resolve this matter.

In regard to the imagination or discourses of the intellect, I know nothing, or very little. I am a poor ignorant person. I must say what my heart dictates, what I feel, or rather, what the Lord causes me to feel; and it is repugnant to me that other persons should learn of it. I know that God, out of his goodness, does great things in me and I do not fear to say with my Mother: *"Fecit mihi magna qui potens est,"* [4] but it suffices for now that only you should know that I recognize and appreciate the graces of God. If you wish to communicate these things to another priest or to your superior for the reasons that you indicated, you may do so.

Sometimes I think of the words of Jesus: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all things to myself." Then it occurs to me that when I shall be, not lifted up from the earth, but buried beneath the earth, I shall draw many souls to Jesus. Then, when everyone walks over my grave and there is no danger that God will be deprived of even the slightest degree of glory, people can talk as much as they wish and can count his mercies. I shall accompany them from heaven and shall shout louder than those on earth so that my voice will be heard by many and God will be loved. It seems to me that the Lord wishes to use me in order to make his love known to many souls, although I do not know how or when this will happen. On that basis, Father, although I have told you of my repugnance and I ask you again not to make known any of these matters before consulting the Lord, not wishing either to anticipate or delay the hour of the Lord, I place myself in your hands so that you can do with me and my affairs as you see what God wills. My desire is to fulfill the point of our holy rule which says: "The Passionist religious should live as if dead to the world and live only for love of Jesus crucified." But since there is no rule for God, may his holy will be done in everything. I wish to repeat what Gemma once said to Jesus: "O Jesus, I desire to die while perfectly fulfilling your most holy will." And Jesus answered: "That is not to die, but to live eternally."

Father, I have started an article about that which God has enabled me to understand about sanctity, but I am afraid of not saying things correctly, because I do not know how to explain myself. Be so good as to tell me whether there is anything in the article I already sent you that is opposed to the teaching of the Church. It does not matter if you cannot answer promptly, for I wish to finish some paintings in order to give them to the Prioress for her feast day, November 15. Then I shall write to you again. She asked me to thank you for the little book, *Sanctifying Mission of Mary.* She was pleased with it.

Prostrate at your feet, I beg your blessing. Your affectionate daughter in Jesus,

Mary Magdalen

Salamanca
November 12, 1922

Dearest daughter in the Lord:

May he be always in your soul and fill it with his divine Spirit, who will teach you to do that which is most pleasing to God in all things.

I received your letter a few days ago and I read it with much consolation, seeing that our Lord is taking fuller possession of your soul day by day. Be at

[4] "He that is mighty has done great things to me."

peace and let him do his work in you, being careful not to resist him in anything.

I was glad also to witness that languor in which one finds true health. [5] In this way I can better judge things because our Lord does not hide himself from his representatives; nor do faithful souls fear when they are in this condition, however much they would prefer that everything happen secretly. Consequently I am not surprised at your repugnance and your difficulty in writing what I asked of you, for you must necessarily manifest everything you feel in your heart. But that does not matter my daughter. Think rather that you are writing to your Father, who will edit the material and has as much or greater interest than anyone that no one (except possibly a Father who may substitute for me) should suspect your identity. Consequently, write everything without any corrections, as if you were writing for me alone, taking care to avoid speaking in the first person and especially if there is anything that would identify you as a Passionist. When speaking of your order, do so as if you were speaking of some other religious order. But do everything without restraint and as it seems best to you, for it will be easy to retouch everything later and put it in proper form.

I am happy that the article on the Association of Love for Mary was well received. Others have also received it well and I believe that some leaflets will be printed for propaganda. If so, I shall be sure to send you some. I hope the same will be done with what you think about the ease of reaching sanctity, in order to attract more souls and rid them of fear. For that reason, it is important that you speak freely and say whatever you feel; then later, we shall see if it is necessary to delete or correct anything so that no one will be able to identify you and we can avoid any difficulty. Take courage, then; follow the movement of the Lord and take care that his light and graces do not remain sterile in you. Cooperate with him by trying to win hearts for him. Who knows but that it was for this reason that God disposed that we should become acquainted and that you should have placed great confidence in me from the beginning?

As regards your vow of greater perfection, I like your manner of interpreting it according to circumstances, always preserving the holy freedom of spirit which is so proper to the children of God. It also includes that other vow that you wanted to make, and perhaps in that form it would have caused you some concern. Therefore, remain always joyful in the Lord and ever ardent and tranquil.

I cannot write any more for today because I am giving a retreat to our nuns. Pray that they will gain much fruit from it. Never forget to pray for me and my intentions, and especially for a soul that is very much in need.

Since the feast day of your Prioress is near, greet her in my name and give her this little holy card as a proof that I shall be mindful of her before our Lord. In him I bless all of you and I commend myself to your prayers.

Father G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
November, 1922

Dear Father:

With this letter I am sending you the continuation of the article I mailed to you with my previous letter. When I can, with the grace of God, I shall do the others of which you spoke. I have already started one of them but before I can continue, I must write a few letters to Italy. When the holidays approach, as now the feast of Christmas is near, my parents want me to write long letters, especially my mother, who cannot resign herself to my being so far from her (I was her Benjamin). [6] I like to console everyone and more than that, I

[5] Father Arintero is referring to the swooning which Mother Mary Magdalen experienced during one of his visits. In true mystical languor the person never suffers any ill effects.

[6] Benjamin is the name used to designate a favorite child in a family and is taken from the story of Joseph in Genesis 42-44.

want to do good for their souls. I would like to communicate to all the fire that Jesus has enkindled in my heart, this foolish heart which doesn't know how to do anything but foolish things.

Some days ago it seemed to me that the Lord said to me: "When will you learn to love me as I love you?" And he showed me the various ways in which he communicates himself to my soul, how he comes to me and I come to him. God does this with calmness, peace, gentleness, and infinite sweetness, and from this comes a power that attracts, captivates and overwhelms. I, on the other hand, go to God with ardor, impetuosity and impatience, like a child panting from running but not stopping to rest. What a difference! And the worst part is that if the Lord asks when I shall learn, I answer: "Never. I want to love you each day with greater ardor, with greater foolishness. I cannot imitate you, Lord, in the calmness with which you come to me. I have to run to you with all the force of my soul, you who are my center, my life, my rest, my all. I need you always, my Jesus. Without you I cannot live; with you I cannot help but burn and be consumed with love."

Father, it seems that now my soul does not want to know any other love but this; that it doesn't know how to do anything but foolish things. But I understand very well that it cannot be always thus, though I cannot be persuaded that Jesus wants to lead me by any other way. I see nothing but love, and all the ways of the Lord seem to me to be goodness, love and mercy. Yet I do not fail to realize that when the Lord increases or decreases his divine light in the soul, it feels and thinks and understands things in a different way. And after the *"non movebor in aeternum"* [7] comes the *"ut jumentum factus sum."* [8] The Lord grants that I am faithful in both the first and the second way of loving him. And in the second way is it not possible, Father, to die of love for Jesus as I desire? Oh, what things I ask you! Yes, it is possible to die of love for Jesus. My crucified Lord, whom I have just kissed for myself and for you, assures me of this. No one has loved as much as Jesus; no one has been so humiliated, debased, desolate, or abandoned either in heaven or on earth as he was while dying as a victim of love.

I continue to practice prayer with the sick nun as I have already told you. I find God in all places, although I enjoy his presence somewhat less outside of prayer. One day the desire — or rather, the thought — came to me: when shall I be able to return to the community exercises of holy observance? Being with the sick nun, it is now more than three months that I have not gone to refectory with the community or to recreation. Also there are times when I cannot go to choir. In these circumstances I have heard within my soul: "Look at it from the viewpoint of eternity," and that is what I do. How much things change from the aspect of eternity, however painful, heavy, and lengthy they may seem. Time and all things disappear; they are seen as nothing. All the things about which we are frequently concerned are really nothing and they only serve to alienate us from God, our beginning and our end. And to think that for this nothing a man is so foolish as to upset the world and lose his soul. Oh divine light, illumine all souls! Why can I not shout with all my strength and be heard in all parts of the world? I can shout to God and it is certain that he hears me.

As regards that soul that you commended to my prayers, tell the person, if you would, to look at things from the viewpoint of eternity and recommend that he join the Association of Love for most holy Mary. Hearts that are not disposed to receive the graces of the Lord must be entrusted to Mary. She will dispose them and nothing more is needed than the two daily visits. Every day I pray frequently for all the members of the association. Often I make more

[7] "And in my abundance I said: *I shall never be moved*" (Ps. 29:7).

[8] "For my heart hath been inflamed, and my reins have been changed; and I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.
I am become as a beast before thee; and I am always with thee.
Thou hast held me by my right hand; and by thy will thou hast conducted me" (Ps. 79:21-24).

than the two regular visits so that my Mother will call the hearts of all who have promised to make the visits of love and none will be unfaithful. How much our Mother deserves this little testimony of love, especially from souls that belong to her in a special way because they are consecrated to God.

Father, you tell me in your letter that perhaps God has disposed that we should meet each other in order to win hearts. Without a doubt, Father, that is true. First of all that we may help each other to give our own hearts completely to God, and then to make many souls realize how little is lacking to them to belong completely to Jesus. With what great love Jesus awaits souls in order to press them to his heart.

After praying to God for my Order, I pray for your magazine, which is mine also, because it helps us so much to fulfill our mission of making God loved.

In the first visit that we make to our dear Mother, send me your blessing and I shall ask her to bless you, Father, and to give us love.

Your affectionate daughter in Jesus.

Mary Magdalen

Salamanca
December 20, 1922

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May Jesus be always in your soul and may he inflame it more and more with his love, and thus make of it a dwelling place that pleases him and where he can enter whenever he wishes and find refuge there, when so many hearts are closed to him as were the doors in Bethlehem. May he grant you and the Prioress and all the nuns a joyous Christmas and a New Year filled with blessings and a new life ever renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I received your November letter and I was pleased with that ardor of a child and those impulses with which your soul goes to Jesus, who greatly desires that all children should go to him that way. I am also pleased with that liberty of spirit with which you understand and should understand your vow of greater perfection. To see it in any other way would hold you back instead of helping you run after him in the odor of his aroma. That liberty is given by the divine Spirit, who is always suggesting to the soul whatever Jesus desires and is always teaching the soul all truth. Therefore be at peace with that interior guidance which no other can supplant and which can supplant every other when it is sought and cannot be found. That, in fact, is why I did not hasten to answer your letter, since I saw that there was no urgency; moreover, I did not have the time. You know that my requests must always be in conformity with that which you see interiorly is most necessary, in order not to restrict you in any way and much less to impede the flights of your soul. So you did well to suspend the writing I had requested and only to return to it when you could readily do so without neglecting your duties or more urgent matters, such as that clothing for the children. [9]

In those general commands of the Prioress and those simple interior desires, investigate whether or not they are obstacles to something that is more certain and secure, as would be any duty or any other explicit obedience. Also, in the matter of your health, if you see clearly that there is any foundation and that the Prioress does not wish you to be exposed, you would do better, I think, to follow her wishes and not your own devotion. But if you see clearly that God is asking that sacrifice of you, or anything else, and that what the Prioress asks is truly less perfect, while interiorly God is asking something of greater perfection, then I think that you may act with that holy deception and abide only by the expressed wishes and not give her the chance to command that which is less perfect. But, I repeat, in each instance the interior voice will tell you better and you should listen to it and be at peace.

My daughter, rouse yourself to continue writing little by little whatever will contribute to the greater glory of God and his most holy Mother.

[9] This obviously refers to something discussed during one of Father Arintero's visits.

I don't have time for any more, but I wish all of you again a joyous Christmas and I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Father John G. Arintero, O.P.

8.
CHRIST IN THE SOUL

Deusto
January 1, 1923

Dear Father:

May the Lord grant you a good year. I do not know when you will receive this letter, but even if it arrives late, it does not matter. We are not of the world nor are we regulated by its maxims and its lying compliments. We live and are united in the charity of God and in him we know there is no time, no before or after. With all his goods and riches the Lord is always at our disposal as servants of his house. May the love of Jesus our Savior live and reign always in our hearts until he consumes them.

This morning when I had pressed Jesus close to my heart, or rather, when he pressed me closely to his heart, united thus to him, I greeted everyone, beginning with the Pope. For you, I prayed for love so that the fire of love would transform both of us in Jesus and give us the grace never to depart a single step from the road which his loving hand has traced out for us. I made him an offering of both of us — you as his instrument and myself as the material, so that the divine Artist may use us as he pleases and bring forth at last a beautiful work that is worthy of the most holy hands of God. May the designs of the Lord be fulfilled in us; this is what I desire and nothing more. If we would all do the will of God, the earth would quickly be converted into a paradise.

I am now going to tell you my resolutions for this new year. What Jesus asks of me is love. He asks it of me at the end and at the beginning of the year, at the end and at the beginning of the day and, I can say, at the end and at the beginning of each hour and each minute. Sometimes I have to keep repeating: "Oh Jesus, I love you! Oh Jesus, I love you! Jesus, my light, my love, light of my eyes, my repose and my all!"

It sometimes happens that when I am writing or painting, I feel as if a hand has taken hold of me, but in a way I can't explain. It is done with gentleness and infinite sweetness. In order to be able to continue working, I have to repeat at once: "Jesus, I love you! Jesus, I love you!" Then, like a hungry begger who receives a piece of bread, he is content and seems to rest in my poor love. Oh what great hunger he has to be loved by us, his poor creatures.

A few weeks ago, while I was repeating, "My God, I love you; I want my life to be a continuous act of love," the Lord said to me: "Not only an act of love, but an act of perfect love." He made me understand that there are degrees of love, and these are very numerous until one arrives at perfect love, and it is this last degree to which I must aspire. Since my love is still small and weak, it has to be helped by divine consolations, but perfect love remains alone, loses all sensible consolation, and stands by itself, sustained by naked faith. To reach this state I know that my spirit must detach itself from many things and be despoiled of everything. When it has lost everything and I remain in a state of nothingness, it is in that nothingness that I shall find my God and I shall love him with a perfect love, because my spirit will have become more like him who is pure spirit. In the brightness of these lights I recognize how imperfect my love is yet, and I feel many desires, cost what it may, to arrive at that degree to which the Lord invites me. God wants this and I want it too; with his grace I shall attain it, saying: "To die or to go forward."

Therefore, my resolutions for this year will be to remain firm in the good that I have undertaken and never to depart from it even when I feel insensible and cold. If I do not experience the divine presence, I shall not on that account cease to believe that God sees me and loves me, nor to make acts of love and to practice virtue. The less I experience God, the more I shall seek him in humility and confidence. And since when there is no sensible

consolation it is easier to commit imperfections and to do things with a bad will, carelessness and in haste, I shall endeavor always to abstract from what I feel and to work calmly and with attention, especially in matters of devotion and acts of religious observance.

In this way I shall please Jesus, because it is he who with his blessed hands prepares the purgative for his poor sick spouse, and seeing that she accepts it with the same love, confidence and gratitude with which she receives the sweetmeats, he will be content and will not give me more than is necessary. In this state of soul, besides being purified, one attains true confidence, without ceasing to believe in the love of Jesus when one does not experience it.

These days Jesus has made me perform acts of confidence in him and understand how much it pleases him who is love when one never doubts his love. God loves his creatures because he is good and not because they are good. And since this motive of love exists always, for God cannot cease to be what he is, I shall always be loved by him even as I yearn for his love.

You will say, Father: "My daughter, this is easy to say, but when the hour arrives . . . ." You know, Father, that I am accustomed to everything, although it may not seem so. I know Jesus, and nothing that he does surprises me. Moreover, for some time now, although I appreciate and enjoy the divine consolations, I appreciate and enjoy virtue even more, and none of those things would console me if they were not joined to the desire and the resolve to perfect myself more and more. I know clearly that this is so, because when I fail in virtue in any way, I suffer more on this account than when I do not experience the sweetness of the love of God. I think that you will have known in your own life that this is so, and you will not think that I make my spiritual progress consist in receiving more or less consolations. No, Father, not at all. Thanks be to God, I am not guilty of this error. Uncreated light has illumined my soul on this point. You will know it from the articles I am writing on sanctity, where I write what I experience and what helps or guides my soul. And although I explain it poorly, I think you will understand and will know my sentiments, or rather, the sentiments that Jesus gives me.

I was greatly consoled and am in agreement with what you said in your last letter. I read it again three days later: "Be at peace with that interior guidance which no other can supplant and which can supplant every other." This, Father, is what I thought too, but if you could see what a great difference there is between something stated and confirmed by you and that same thing as known and understood by me alone! That is why I tell you everything. Even if God were to give me wings to fly to him, in order to take flight, I would still need you to tell me to do so. When you say to me: "It is of God," then I feel strong and have no fear; I can do anything. Your letters seem to come from heaven; they give light to my intellect and strength to my will.

One day I was thinking: "Why do the letters of Father Arintero produce this effect in me?" Then I understood that it was because he is an instrument given to me by God and it is God who makes all things efficacious by his grace. This does not happen when one does not use the means according to the divine will. I owe everything to the most blessed Mary, to whom I have commended the sanctification of my soul. Before I knew you, she was the only one who directed me for some years. From this heavenly director I have learned that I can become a saint and sanctify souls by kissing the wounds of Jesus, because love is a master that teaches everything, makes everything easy, lovable, and sweet. When I have time I shall tell you more on this subject.

When will you return to Deusto? If you can tell me, I would like to know.

I beg your blessing and please bless also my resolutions so that I shall be able to fulfill them.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
January 27, 1923

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be always with you and impress upon you his own sentiments in order to make you conformable to his divine image in all things.

I was pleased with the resolutions you have made for this year and I would have liked to answer your letter at once, encouraging you to put them into practice, since all our progress can be reduced to this: to love our Lord more and more perfectly and without interruption and to adhere to him, however he treats us, without seeking our own satisfaction, but to give pleasure to him and to do the will of the Father. Take courage then, my daughter, and continue to be docile to the inspirations of the divine Spirit, who more and more is making you feel his loving touches which in killing, give new life.

Give many thanks to the Lord if my poor words are able to encourage you in any way, since from him alone can come any efficacy they have for your soul. God disposes for the good of all the members of his Church, so that some receive through one means and others through another the lights and graces they need. And one can know that a particular person is a true instrument of the action of Jesus on us precisely because his words have efficacy while others do not. I must also confess to you, my daughter, that your words have practically the same effect on me, and in this I recognize that it must be God who has providentially disposed that we should know each other and understand each other so well from the very first moment. May it all help us to love him more and more and serve him better, and in this love and service to work so that others will love and serve him.

Therefore, I would have liked to answer you promptly, but I was so occupied with the publication of the magazine and a very delicate and urgent work on St. Teresa, that I had to read your letter in a very cursory manner. Until today, when I finished the work and sent it on its way, it was impossible to answer you or even to send you the leaflets for your consolation and to help propagate the visits of love. Mother Berchmans sent them to me some days ago and it was she who had the idea of distributing them among school girls. God grant that they produce much fruit and that there will be many devotees of these visits of love to our sweet Mother.

I would like to write at greater length, but today I can do no more. I have other urgent letters awaiting me. Be at peace in following your way according to the inspiration of the moment and in writing from your heart when you feel so moved.

With my affectionate greetings to the Prioress, I bless all the community and commend myself to your prayers.

Father John Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
February 1, 1923

Dear Father:

I was waiting for your letter, which arrived on January 28 and, like all your letters, was a source of much peace and consolation for my soul and a stimulus to write to you again. There are so many things I would like to tell you that I don't know where to begin. I shall not begin with the bottomless abyss of God's love, for fear of becoming so deeply involved that I shall not be able to say anything else. Father, what things the Lord does! I tell him to give to other souls the sensible consolation of his love in order to make them love him, for I shall love him the same even without those consolations. Then he seems to hide somewhat, but when I least think of it because of something I see or hear or remember, I seem to feel his divine heart touching my heart and causing me to experience a joy that human language cannot describe.

Even as I write, the Lord is here. I experience him so intimately united to my poor soul that he penetrates it entirely and plunges me into his infinite

being where one day, when I have been made completely one with him, we shall remain that way eternally. It almost seems, Father, that the Lord is less able to be without me than I am to be without him, because if he hides himself for a little while, he soon returns to me with greater longing for love. And then I find myself involved in that which I did not want.[1] The love of Jesus has conquered. In love no one can compete with him. He seizes the soul and it is immediately incapacitated, overwhelmed, powerless to resist him. What is it to do? Simply to be patient and to wait for love to rest a little.

Sometimes the Prioress has called me and asked me what is the matter, because she noticed that my voice trembles when I read or pray. I am inclined to think that she does not suspect what it is, because once when I said to her, "It is the Lord," she told me that I think too much and that I get too involved with spiritual things. But Father, whether one thinks or not, when the Lord wishes, he does everything himself.

The article I am sending you is for you to do as you think best and as the Lord inspires you, for I have achieved my purpose, which is to obey you. I have another longer article that I shall leave for the month of March, when it is more suitable to speak about the Passion. Let me remind you about your promise that no one will ever know the author of these articles. Only through trust in your promise have I been able to overcome my repugnance in writing them, because my mission to do great things for the sanctification of souls is by love and sacrifice and not by writing, which pertains to you.

When I read in your book, *Mystical Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles*, that God permits his brides to be mothers of souls so that they may create many spiritual children for him, I desired that glorious motherhood and I had the feeling that the Lord would grant it to me. And since my aspirations are so great, I said at once: "Lord, fill my breasts not with milk to nourish infants, but with wine, strong wine from the mystical wine cellar, because I desire to inebriate souls that already love you and to establish them in perfect charity so that they can sleep upon your breast the precious sleep which you protect lest it be interrupted."

Do my ideas seem foolish to you? You have already told me that they are the foolishness of love, and I know well that unless one gives vent to this foolishness, one could not live in love, but would die. And Jesus wants us to live in order one day to die of love.

Do you know, Father, what I ask of the Lord for us? If by dying we can make him loved more, let us die. And if by living we can attract more hearts to his love, he should let us live as long as he desires. With these dispositions one could almost say that it is the same thing to be on earth as in heaven, because one does the same thing — one loves, and with that we have done everything.

But I do not want you to think that I always and only give love to Jesus. That is the way it ought to be, but, unfortunately, I am so unfaithful and I offend him. A few days ago the nuns were speaking in recreation about people who have scruples and become sad and melancholy. One nun said jokingly: "I would pay to see Sister Magdalen sad someday." "Because of scruples?", I asked. "For whatever reason," she answered.

"I hope that you will never see me in that state, because what makes people sad in religious life is always wounded self-love. At the beginning of my religious life I was once sad for this reason; but now self-love does not bother me and for that reason I hope in the Lord that you will never see me sad."

Immediately I realized that I should not have spoken those words. They contain something of self-esteem and scarcely two hours later the Lord made me realize my lowliness. I went to gather some cabbage in the garden, as I sometimes do to save the lay sisters some work. This time a lay sister had

[1] Mother Mary Magdalen means that she does not seek or desire the consolations of God's love or the quasi-ecstatic seizure that incapacitates her for her duties and service of charity to others.

already picked them and she complained to the Prioress that she had no need for more vegetables now. Both the Prioress and the lay sister scolded me a little. Then my self-love, of which I had just said it did not give me any trouble, made me say: "I shall not pick any more, and I shall not pick them even when they are needed." I realized instantly that my words were full of pride and very contrary to the spirit of Jesus. I asked pardon and humbled myself, and Jesus did not permit his unfaithful spouse to lose her sense of peace, but he did make me realize my nothingness and not to trust in myself. I had not committed a fault as serious as this for a long time. I am not surprised at my fault, but I wanted you to know about it.

Asking your blessing,

Mary Magdalen

Salamanca
February 19, 1923

Dear daughter in Jesus:

May he ever be in your soul and may his holy love inebriate it more and more so that it will breathe nothing but love and will not think or dream of anything but to love and make loved him who so loved us. In that way one will completely forget about self, for he will ordain charity in us in such a way that everything will be directed by divine love, and self-love will be conquered and dead and will never make one its own. But by humbling ourselves and trusting only in him who is "our virtue and strength," one makes progress in everything.

Be assured that your letter consoled me greatly, seeing that you include me in your ardent desires that we shall with one heart love our Lord and make him loved both in life and in death. My daughter, foster those holy desires and also your desire to win and to generate many souls who will be "your joy and your crown," because in that way you shall give the greatest pleasure to your divine Spouse.

It seems well to me that you should desire to nourish souls with wine rather than with milk; and be assured that God never gives such desires in vain, but that they will be realized perfectly as long as we trust in him and let him work in us. Yes, everything must be a work of love and sacrifice, but in the way that he gently disposes. So you can be at peace and send me as you can and in the form that seems best to you whatever the Lord suggests to you. With his grace I shall be able to discern what is meant only for me and what I can use in order to help others, but without anybody ever knowing anything about you. As I already told you, I must speak of some things to a Father whom I trust in order better to discern what God wants. But I do this with the greatest reserve and insisting upon absolute secrecy, so you can be completely at peace.

On Saturday I must leave for Madrid, where I shall be until March 7 for the Teresian Congress, where matters of the mystical life will be discussed. Pray to God to enlighten all of us and enable us to expound true doctrine.

With my affectionate greetings to the Prioress and all the nuns and recommending myself to your prayers in a special way during this holy season, I bless you in Christ.

Father John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
March 12, 1923

Dear Father:

When I received your letter we were in the fourth day of retreat, a time in which we do not usually read letters. Knowing who it was that had written, the Prioress kindly told me that if it was necessary that I read the letter, she would give me permission to do so. I thanked her and added: "It is certain that what Father says will do me good, but I must also mortify myself and wait." I put the letter at the foot of my crucifix until the end of retreat.

Father, please excuse me for not acknowledging the leaflets on the Associa-

tion of Love for Mary in my previous letter. Thank you for sending them; I am obliged to you. Words fail to express my gratitude but I shall do so before the Lord. May he deign to consume both of us in the same fire of his divine love.

Regarding the leaflets on the Association, what a great consolation it is to see that it is being promulgated. God grant that all will understand that sanctity is attained only through the means which the Lord has disposed for each one, and that a tender love for Mary is an indispensable and a sure means by which he wishes all of us to go to him. Practiced with the spirit and love that it requires, this devotion is a very practical means for attaining this end. Permit me to say that they should not forget the ecclesiastical approbation, and if they print them again, they should state this.

And now Father, let us enter into our souls, into that hidden self where God works, so that both of us can say together: *"Magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis et misericordiae eius non est numerus."* [2] God and our souls! What is the difference between them, Father? I was once considering why we do not call our soul God, since it seems to me that they are but one thing and there is no difference between them. This would help to explain better certain mysteries of love. Some time ago, when I felt closely united to God, in that intimate union in which one seems to treat of God as something of one's own, I feared that perhaps there was too much intimacy. Then I remembered what Father Germain had said to Gemma when she treated God with such confidence: "Always remember that he is a God of infinite majesty and you are a wretched creature."

Nevertheless, I do not recall that he ever said anything like this to me (of course, it was because I did not enjoy the same loving confidence that Gemma did). On the contrary, he always recommended this virtue to me and wanted my confidence in God to be intimate, tender and persuasive. In order that you may understand, Father, how this holy servant of God directed my soul, I shall relate a particular incident, because it has always remained deeply impressed on my mind. I don't remember the particular reason, but I told him about my fear and anxiety. These were his words: "Love Jesus, love him very much, and do not be concerned about these details and petty things. Jesus is our God, but he is also our father, our brother, our all. He himself deigned to call us his brothers. After the Resurrection he said to Magdalen: 'Tell my brothers . . . .' Jesus is not a phantasm or a product of the imagination. He is a reality, a reality!" And he repeated these words with emphasis.

You will not be surprised, Father, that because of these teachings, sentiments of confidence in God have always predominated in me. But, as I told you before, now that I experience this intimacy and confidence more deeply, I have had some doubt as to whether or not it is excessive, and I wanted to ask you about it for my own assurance. But since the Lord is so good to us and seeing that you do not have time to give me a lengthy reply, he himself instructs me. Therefore, you need do nothing more than say: "It is well; it is well."

The Lord makes me understand that the intimate union which just souls experience with him is the result of his dwelling in them as on his throne; and when he does not find any obstacles to his loving operations, he exercises them with all freedom, so that the soul cannot help but know that it is God who is working in it. Then, moved by a sweet violence, it is impelled to give itself completely to this God of love so that he may be the one who rules and governs its entire being. The soul would like to disappear in order not to impede him in the slightest way. But the Lord does not consent to this; he wishes the soul to remain and, seeing the greatness of his love, to say: *"Ecce quomodo Deus amat nos."* [3] From this comes that strong union which leaves the soul so surprised and astonished that it does not know what to do or say, because it cannot comprehend this mystery of love. But from the moment that the Lord enables it to understand the reality of the mystery, that God

[2] "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised: and of his mercy there is no number."

[3] "Behold how much God loves us."

being what he is, can do all things and does as he wishes without anyone being able to ask him: "Cur ita facis," [4] the soul is no longer surprised at anything. If God should desire to use the soul for great and difficult tasks, the soul knows and understands well the origin from which they proceed and nothing surprises it. It simply sees and admires divine love at work in itself.

Father, what things I am saying! Rather than speak of them, one should contemplate them in silence.

In all these things that the Lord is effecting, with each new light that he gives the soul so that it can understand new mysteries of his love, it sees the previous mystery as imperfect and defective, since it lacked that which the new light can add. And this happens with each new ray of light received from the divine Sun. What begins in the just soul in this world will, I believe, continue for all eternity in heaven. Let us go forward, then!

But there is more; since God created man to know him, love him and serve him, and we can do none of these things properly because of our sinful condition, Jesus Christ has done it by becoming incarnate so that the intentions of God would not be frustrated. Jesus did this in his mortal life and he continues to do it in the most holy Sacrament of the altar. This would be sufficient and more than sufficient to fulfill the obligations of the creature to its Creator. But this does not suffice for love, and therefore he takes possession of the soul that does not prevent him and from there, as from his sanctuary, he makes rise to the throne of the Most High the worship that is due to him. Jesus could do all this while the Blessed Sacrement dwells in our hearts, but then it would be for only a brief time, for once the species are gone, this hymn of perfect praise would also be gone. And since God deserves that we should incessantly direct our prayers to him, and his love wants man to be united with him and enjoy the most intimate and direct relation with him that is possible, he effects this in a remarkable manner in that intimate union of which I spoke. Although I explained it badly, I believe that you will not concentrate on the words but on the spirit that animated them and will understand what God is doing with my poor soul, so that you will be able to direct it along the path that he wishes. And since the path is infinite, the soul can make progress without ever ceasing.

Yes, Father, to die or to go forward. My desires are great, even infinite. But it is not I who desire, because then how many times my inconstant will would vacillate. No, I repeat, it is not I; it is Jesus who desires in me and works in me. I rest on the will of him who never changes and who wills in me. Because of him I hope that my desires will be realized. Because of him I hope to be courageous for sacrifice, trials, the Calvary that awaits me. Then I shall say also: "It is not I who suffer, who am immolated; it is Jesus who does it in me in order in this way to continue his work as Redeemer." Jesus has not only been our Redeemer in the past, but he is so now. At every moment he is redeeming souls who, not availing themselves of the redemption on Calvary, still need redemption through Jesus in the souls of those who love him and live united with him in love. [5]

It is in this intimate union with God that one recognizes the horrible ugliness of sin. It is this abyss of evil and ingratitude that reveals to us the goodness and love of our God. Before the Lord gave me light which he now gives me, I knew no better way to understand what an enormous evil sin is, except to consider it in the Passion of Jesus. The words of the prophet Isaiah, who saw the Savior under the weight of our sins and reduced to the state of *"quasi leprosum,"* [6] and the words which David puts in his mouth, *"Ego sum vermis et non homo,"* [7] always enabled me to see the enormity of sin. But since God

[4] "Why do you do this?"

[5] Redemption comes only through Jesus crucified, but the merits of the passion and death of Christ are applied through Mary, the sacraments, Christ's ministers and souls intimately united with Christ as victim souls.

[6] "As it were, a leper."

[7] "I am a worm, and no man."

has infinite ways to instruct and illumine souls, he has utilized this admirable union which enables me to suffer with him, in order to give me a greater knowledge of this supreme and infinite evil.

When we consider the Passion and look at the wounds, the blood, the humiliation and the death of Jesus, we see also the gravity of sin. But in this union of which I am speaking, it is not the eyes but the heart that perceives these things. It feels and knows by an excess of love that is inexplicable that God dwells and resides in the soul, in our very own soul, the soul of our soul. And that the soul could commit sin, could seem to destroy and annihilate that God of love — this is something so contradictory that it is unthinkable. It seems incredible. And not only serious sin, but even venial sin and imperfections take on such a repugnant appearance that there is no word to describe it. It opposes and destroys that admirable order and integrity by which love rules and governs the soul. This is something so horrible that the mere thought of its possibility is enough to deaden the pleasure and delight that love provides. It is a sweet and savory suffering because it proceeds from love, but it is a suffering nevertheless.

It is impossible for me to describe it better. You are able to do so and I hope that you will. Make known in all its possible forms this horrible monster of hell, not only to sinners who have lost grace, but also to good souls that possess it but are not careful to avoid light faults, imperfections or anything opposed to sanctity.

While on this point, I think I should tell you something about my interior suffering. From what I have already told you about my soul, it is possible that you have thought that whatever suffering I have experienced up to now has been slight and only physical and has not penetrated to the interior of my soul. It would not be surprising if you thought this, because I have never told you anything about this type of suffering. On the contrary, many times I have declared that except for brief periods, the divine light has always illumined my soul, and therefore my soul has not experienced the terrible night of which you have spoken. Nevertheless, I think that I have not been exempt from sufferings. God has an infinite variety of ways to make souls suffer, many of which can only be understood by those who experience them; it is not possible to describe them. If I have said nothing up to now, it is because of the difficulty I have in explaining these things. Now that the divine light illumines me more, and you also, I want to say something, although from an expression in one of your early letters, I knew that while I had never said anything, you already understood. This consoled me, for it is always consoling to hear someone say what one is experienceing, especially when it is difficult to describe.

You told me, Father, that I was passing through "the martyrdom of love." In these words I found an explanation of my suffering. If it is a martyrdom, I said to myself, it has to be painful; and if it is a martyrdom of love, it has to be sweet. Oh, what love can do! Who can describe it? Sometimes it seems that it divides the soul in two; at other times it cuts it into little pieces, but without taking one's life, for that would be a relief; and the relief that love gives is suffering. On this earth it is impossible to enjoy the delights of pure love. That is for heaven, not for this place of exile. Here, ordinarily, when God gives light to a soul, it is that it may suffer with him the pains of love, pains that have no name.

It sometimes happens that I feel as if I am suffocating, oppressed, unable to breathe; and yet I don't know how to say it, because it is none of these things. Everything happens with sweetness and gentleness, though sometimes it is so violent that moans escape one's lips. It is the need to breathe the air of a higher region than is found on this earth, where one is compelled to stay by love. Love is then like bonds or chains that bind and restrain the soul and as long as the poor imprisoned soul which longs to see God *"sicut est,"* [8] is not freed, they cause it extreme suffering.

[8] "As he is."

Father, in charity, do not let anyone read these foolish things. Many persons do not believe them. For one who does not love, they are enigmas, and for one who loves they are mysteries. Something can be understood about them, as happens regarding the mysteries of faith, in which, while one does not understand what they are, one understands how they can be as they are, because God can do all things.

In the midst of all this the Lord has granted me the great grace that for now — and I hope in the future — all my foolishness is completely interior. Only you have penetrated into the sanctuary of my soul and know what God is doing there. The spirit of our order is very simple and ordinary. The observance of the holy rule is everything. And this is so conducive to sanctity, as was stated by the revisor named by the Holy Father before the rule was approved, that it is not necessary to add anything. If this were not so, especially in a new community such as this one, where all the religious are young and as yet have little experience in the things of the spirit, how many difficulties could arise! Acting under that nervous sickness which is so common, one could believe that by closing one's eyes and breathing a little forcefully, one is already a saint. But to reach sanctity, sighs do not suffice; it is necessary to do other things, things that are learned in silence and interior peace from him who speaks and teaches within the soul. How many things are learned and understood in this school! Many times I think: "If only the ministers of the Lord would let themselves be completely governed and instructed by this interior Teacher, how many souls they could win to the love of Jesus." He would continue through them his mission of Savior and with what great joy he would do it through those he has especially selected for this task.

Father, when you study in books those beautiful doctrines and that profound science of sanctity which attracts the soul and fills it with enchantment and holy enthusiasm, do not ever forget that it has all come from that school and only in that school, in the interior of the soul united to God, can one learn the lesson well. Books are not enough nor are teachers who explain them. Words pass away with little or no profit. How many times it has happened to me that I have heard things again and again or read them again and again but have remained unmoved, have understood nothing, or at best, if they have inspired me somewhat, they were feeble flames that were extinguished before they reached my heart. But from the moment that the Lord began to teach me, such was not the case. He is the truth, and the truth remains in the soul always and for all eternity. And in this truth how many things I understand even about my past life, of that time in which there were so many enigmas in the spiritual life. But from the moment that the light of truth can freely shine before our eyes, everything becomes clear. And how simply all this takes place. There are no words to describe it.

I am going to tell you about something that happened to me a few days ago. It pertains to those things that the Lord makes the soul understand in this interior school. Our rule states that every night after the rosary, before retiring, the Prioress should bless all the nuns with holy water. For the consolation of the sick nun, the Prioress was accustomed, before retiring, to go to her cell and give her the blessing. For some days while she was indisposed, she delegated this sweet mission to me. While I was giving the blessing to the sick nun, I knew that in a few words the Prioress had conferred on me her authority for performing that action and that my blessing had the same value as if she herself had conferred it, as long as it was received with the same sentiments. I realized the relationship between superiors and God — the power of authority — because by a few words any person receives the power that the superior gives. And how much it pleases God when subjects, without regarding the person or the manner in which the authority is exercised, see in it God himself, from whom all lawful authority comes. I could tell you many things about this, Father, and they are the teaching of the Lord. One knows that they come from divine truth and I do not doubt that you yourself recognize this, although I explain things so badly.

I do not have time to continue as I would like, and later I shall have even less time because the Prioress has said that I must go to work in the garden. We have to plant potatoes and pull weeds. May you, Father, weed out defects and sins from souls and sow in them the divine seed of grace. In this way we shall both be doing the same thing and we shall both harvest the same if we do it with the same love.

Bless your affectionate daughter in the Lord.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
March 16, 1923

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be with you always and make you love in all things according to his divine Spirit.

I was much consoled by your letter, seeing how the Lord is advancing his loving work in you and giving you light and support so that you can let him work in you without presenting any obstacles. Therefore, continue peacefully and bravely because by faithfully heeding the interior voice of him who said: "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me and I will give them eternal life," you will surely receive it in ever greater abundance until you seem to live more in heaven than on earth, and for you to live is Christ.

So you should follow peacefully that path of intimate familiarity and pure love which he has traced out for you. That love will transform you and renew you and at the same time purify and refine you, causing you to suffer a sweet martyrdom. Consequently, you should not be preoccupied with the nights you must still pass through, because love will illumine your steps so that you can go in search of the Beloved "in obscurity but securely, with no other light or guide but that which burns in your heart."

There I believe he will make you taste and see whatever he wants of you. He will show that he is all yours so that you may be all his, recognizing where and how he nourishes you, for he himself is the food and light of your soul, while sin is eternal death.

Animate yourself to win souls for him, and since you desired that we be united in him, what you cannot do alone you can suggest to me or put in my hands, which as you know are the hands of a Father who wants to keep you very hidden and secure so that nothing will disturb your mystical sleep.

I was also pleased to see the good that you have been able to do for the sick sister. You should always use the occasions that our Lord provides so that you can continue doing good whenever he disposes.

Your article is now at the printer and the others will be published in due time. You need not be concerned about them but try only to be as faithful as possible in whatever is asked of you. When you have free time, continue to unburden your heart, for that is how I shall be able to understand completely the work of God in your soul and to see that it is all his work. Take heart, then, and do not ever be discouraged, because whenever human nature becomes involved in anything, its weakness is immediately evident. Also remain firm in your resolution to die or to go forward.

With this and repeating that all is well and that you should be at peace and encouraged, I must say farewell for today for I still have many letters to write.

Without time for anything more, I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Father G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
March 22, 1923

Dear Father:

I wasn't planning to write to you at this time, but since the Prioress is doing so, she was so kind as to ask me if I wanted to take advantage of the occasion. So I hastily send you this article to which the Lord has been prompting me for some time.

I consider one of the greatest graces I have received from the Lord to be the day when for the first time I consecrated my whole life to him by the vow of chastity. All the other graces that the Lord gave me that day were proof that my consecration was pleasing to him. Therefore I have been prompted to make this known in order to enlighten some soul concerning this great treasure which is so little known and appreciated, namely, holy purity. It is the first virtue which the spotless Lamb wishes to find in souls, in order to admit them to the intimacy of his love. In the midst of my joy, how great was the pain that I felt on the day that I made that vow (I was seventeen years old) for not having known about it previously and offered to Jesus this white lily which transforms a wretched creature into an angel on earth. Nevertheless, Father, the thoughts that pass through my mind on making this article known (if you think it is God's will that it be known) are numerous and all of them tend to disturb me.

I think that perhaps this article reveals a secret that the King wishes to remain hidden, that these secret and intimate matters should not be spoken of, because once revealed, they lose all their beauty. It is so unpleasant to talk about one's affairs, to speak about oneself, as long as obedience does not oblige one to do so. Father, I would never finish if I had to tell you all the things that pass through my mind. And it all comes from my great imperfection. If I were dead to self as Jesus wishes, I would not be concerned about these things, because it is for you to judge and not for me. Pardon me and please be patient with me, and the Lord will reward you for everything.

I would like to tell you something about my soul, but I must leave it for another time. The holy season of the Passion, in which we are now, obliges a Passionist to forget everything else in order to concentrate on the sufferings and pains of her Spouse. Let us see, Father, which of us can dry more tears of our beloved Mother in her sorrows and more closely accompany Jesus in his martyrdom of love. May the great mysteries of Gethsemani, the trial and Calvary unfold in our hearts because of their intimate union with Jesus. And when our Beloved has expired on the cross, may our hearts be his tomb, closed to everything else, until our eyes see his glorified wounds.

Let us see who will give the most kisses to Jesus. How pleasing it is to Jesus when one frequently kisses his sacred wounds with lips that each morning drink the Blood from those wounds. And may the hands which mystically raise him up on the cross, embrace him with love during the day.

Happy Easter, Father, with an increase of love.

Prostrate at your feet I beg your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

9.
HOLY WEEK

Deusto
April 3, 1923

Dear Father:

Now that our lips can once again repeat the joyful "Alleluia" and the divine Gardener has made his lovable voice heard by his loving Magdalen, this other Magdalen is also granted the consolation of opening her heart to you in order to hear from your lips the voice of the risen Savior, who has the words of eternal life.

I would like to speak to you about many things, to continue explaining the mysteries of love which God works in my poor soul, which he seems to have selected for his permanent dwelling. But this poor leaf, which wants to be moved only by the soft breeze of the Holy Spirit, feels inclined to tell you how she spent Holy Week. Don't expect me to relate great and extraordinary things, everything is ordinary and very simple. Yet, in this ordinary and simple way, what great things the Lord does, but only for souls that realize that it is God who does these things in them. One who does not recognize who is the author of what occurs in his soul — the mover of all movement and operations — cannot appreciate them and rightly evaluate them. But we, Father, know that it is God, and no one else, who rules us, governs us, and works in us with infinite love; and therefore we appreciate and acknowledge with joy any of those operations that proceed from God, on whom we wish to depend without reserve.

What God says through the prophet Jeremiah — *"Desolata est omnis terra, quia nullus est qui recogitet corde"* [1] — applies generally to the case when there is no one who dedicates himself to the consideration of the truths of the faith. But it seems to me that by these words God does not refer only to this, although there are many who think so. I believe that those words were spoken particularly to make us understand that there are none who are recollected in their hearts to consider what happens there, what God does there, how he dwells in us, the love with which he governs and directs us interiorly and exteriorly, arranging all things to win us to his love. For by these considerations alone all things are seen in truth; but without them, everything is confusion and one is disposed to form erroneous ideas about God, sanctity, and the mysteries of infinite love contained in our holy religion. If persons would only understand these things. I do not know how to make them understand, but I will offer God my consuming desire that all may know these things; and when I go to heaven, I shall say to my God that he should satisfy my desire if he wishes my joy to be complete. For if the Lord does not satisfy this desire, it seems to me that I will not be able to be happy even in heaven, on seeing that such a great treasure is still unknown on earth.

What a pity to think that when there is such an easy way for everyone to be happy and holy and for God to be content with his creatures, none or very few take advantage of it. Many believe that in order to hear the voice of the Lord, it is necessary that a voice or a cry be heard or even that some extraordinary phenomenon make us know that it is he. But I know that such is not the case. Simply by getting rid of all obstacles, our soul hears the soft voice of God and knows the delicate operations of his divine hand.

But I am straying from the subject of Holy Week, which I mentioned at the beginning of this letter. Since the Friday before Holy Week, the feast of our Sorrowful Mother, my soul experienced the presence of the Lord more strongly. It understood how the love of Jesus and Mary in the sorrowful mysteries of the Passion is ignored and badly understood by many persons who prefer to close their eyes to this light which can enable all souls to know love and the heat of a fire which makes all souls feel its ardor to some extent.

[1] "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart."

Those who resist this light and this fire caused Jesus and Mary to suffer even more during the Passion. Souls that resist or reject love deserve the punishment of all those who rebel against love, namely, abandonment. But this word, abandonment, is so opposed to love that Jesus took the word upon himself, suffering abandonment on the cross in order not to abandon the souls that he seeks and follows in so many ways. I said to Jesus that, like Mary most holy, I desired to accompany him in his search for souls and draw them to his love, and to this end I offered to suffer the sorrows of the Passion with him.

There are two more passions that torment Jesus and Mary: that of Calvary and that of rejected love. I do not know which is more painful to the heart of Jesus. It seems to me that it is the second one, because Jesus would gladly endure Calvary a second time so that his love could triumph. I feel that I am called to accompany him in these two passions he suffered; so this is what I promised him during the days of which I am speaking. My religious profession calls me to the Passion of Calvary, but I am called by a special vocation to the passion of unknown and rejected love, and if I cannot fulfill it on earth, I shall do so in heaven. O Love, so close to man and yet he does not know you!

From the feast of the Seven Dolors these yearnings were experienced more strongly. On Saturday night, when I went to bed, I don't know what I experienced in my heart. In order to calm myself before going to sleep, I sat up in bed for a few moments, saying: "O Jesus, give me love. O Jesus, my Love, I love you. I feel myself burn with your fire, and I ask you to give me more fire, because only the ardors of this divine fire can calm my poor heart. Give me love, love without measure. Forget that my heart is small, and give me your love as if my heart were as infinite as your own, as if I were able to love you as much as you love me. If I die, it does not matter. It is worse to live without loving you. O Jesus, I love you. I thirst for your love."

While I was in this condition, the Prioress came to ask me for a key that she could not find. When she saw me, she thought that I was sick. "No, Mother," I told her, "I feel very well. There is nothing wrong with me in body or in soul. Bodily, I am well, and spiritually I am exceedingly well. God is good and I experience his goodness."

She advised me to go to sleep and I slept until the bell for Matins. When I woke up, the Lord was waiting for me; I sought him out immediately and I experienced the same thing. The tears of Jesus over ungrateful Jerusalem on Palm Sunday struck a response in my soul, and I felt the pain he experienced at the ingratitude of souls whom he visited as their King, asking for their love. Some there were who cried out: *"Hosanna, benedictus!"* [2] but they were only shouts thrown to the wind. Love passes by and souls do not realize the hour of the visit of their Lord, who wishes to remain with them and establish in them his kingdom of love. I wept with Jesus, but not physical tears, which do not suffice, for if those of Jesus did not suffice, how could mine? I wept in my heart, and this manner of weeping, which no one sees, moves God and souls much more. If we would weep more with Jesus, we would obtain more, because the tears of the heart always attain their object.

During those days more than at any other time the words of the Divine Office made such an impression on me that my heart was in a state of constant upheaval. Those words of fire, *"Cum dilexisset suos, in finem dilexit eos,"* [3] I like to understand not only in their literal sense, but as the goal of God's love for men. And what can one say of those other words, *"Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum"*? [4] Jesus hears them, but is silent. Father, what an abyss of mercy is this silence of Jesus. What a difference between those two moments — the one of infinite love on the part of God and the other of infinite ingratitude on the

[2] "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

[3] "Since he loved his own, he loved them to the end."

[4] "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!"

part of man! Jesus is silent and does not condemn the ungrateful soul; he only waits for love to triumph.

Tuesday was the day for confession. You know, Father, how I always desire to receive this sacrament. I entered the confessional and began the *Confiteor* but was unable to finish it or answer the confessor's repeated question: "What is the matter?" I heard him, but it seemed that he was very far away and I would have to shout in order for him to hear me. At the same time I seemed to hear interiorly a soft voice which whispered to me in tones like the light rustle of leaves when the sky is clear. After some moments I recovered myself and finished my confession. I went to the choir, [5] and when I had finished my penance and thanksgiving, I went about my duties.

A few hours later, some people came to speak to the Prioress. It was her turn for confession, so she asked me to go to the turn. [6] My first reaction was to say that I could not, that I felt incapable of speaking, but then I went at once. At the same time the Lord reproached me interiorly and said to me: "Is that the way you practice obedience?" I was very sorry for my failure. It was not a sin, because it was not voluntary, and I had spoken almost without being aware of it; but I knew clearly that I should have been silent and that in not being silent I had failed in perfection. I returned to confession, and on giving me absolution the confessor told me that it was not because I had committed any fault but only for my consolation. See how by reason of circumstances I had the good fortune on that day to receive the Sacrament of Penance twice!

How good the Lord is! I could melt with love for him when I consider such goodness. But at the same time I experience a certain fear. Do I truly love Jesus? Is it true love or only the effect of a vivid imagination? Be so good as to tell me.

On Wednesday afternoon we recite Matins for Holy Thursday and afterwards everything in our monastery is changed. If you could see what those days mean to us! Except for the Divine Office, there is no other common prayer. The silence of the tomb prevails. And for one who understands its eloquent language, how much silence says! The Word of God dies and his brides are silent. If they open their mouths, it is only to ask his mercy in the *Miserere*. [7]

After Matins, the Prioress announced that on the following days, Thursday and Friday, there would be no work, but that after Office each nun should use the time for prayer, meditation or spiritual reading, as the devotion or spirit of each one dictated. Immediately the thought came to me: Good; during these days, when my soul rests in God exclusively, I can offer him the sacrifice of all sensible consolations so that he can use them to attract souls. "O Jesus," I said to him, "I offer you all the joys and consolations which I could otherwise enjoy with you during these days in order to console you for the infidelity of the sheep of your flock in corresponding to your calls of love and in order that by your light and powerful grace they may submit themselves completely to your goodness. I promise you that although I should feel as hard and insensible as a rock, I shall always be with you and shall not lose one minute of time. I shall act in the same way as I do amid great consolations." My offering must have pleased the Lord, since it was he who had inspired me to make it, and at least in part he accepted it.

The following day, Holy Thursday, I renewed my offering at Holy Communion and I asked Jesus, out of the love that induced him to become my good, to grant me to live in a continuous act of perfect love and that this same love should immolate me and keep me united to him in the permanent state of a victim soul. I asked the same grace for you, Father, and for all souls disposed

[5] The choir refers to the chapel of the nuns, where they attend Mass and chant the Divine Office.

[6] The turn is the revolving shelf on which cloistered nuns receive or send out articles and through which they speak to persons in the waiting room of the monastery.

[7] Psalm 50, used as a penitential prayer in monastic orders.

to be made pledges of the love of Jesus. I made this request without any particular sensible consolation or attraction. Only my will operated strongly, because, as the Lord makes me understand it, when the will acts alone, it acts most forcefully, although this is not felt in a sensible way. God gives it a hidden strength and when the will is thereby activated, the soul receives an increase in the three theological virtues.

All can do what I did in the state in which I made this prayer. When love proceeds exclusively from the most noble faculty of our soul — the will — it is then strongest, most secure, most courageous and most persevering. It seems incredible, but it is so, and experience proves it. For if we consider the state of our soul in those cases when we need more grace from the Lord to resolve some great and important matter, in order to be able to communicate his grace to us more abundantly, he withdraws all sensible consolation and leaves the will to operate alone, because then it is more disposed to receive the divine graces, although it does not feel that it is so. How blind and ignorant of the things of God are those who complain in such circumstances that they do not experience sensible consolation, when actually God withdraws it because of his tender, paternal and delicate love. [8]

I spent all day Thursday faithful to my intention, thanks to God's grace, since everything is his gift. I used all the time at my disposal in a very ordinary manner, sometimes meditating, sometimes reading, sometimes reciting vocal prayers. In a word, Father, I did the same as the other nuns, although I did not fail to note that my soul was intimately united with God and that this union was a source of peace and support in the midst of my miseries, weakness, and insensibility. This is the sign of the spirit of the Lord — peace, and to be content with what he gives us, without desiring anything else.

Good Friday is a day of great mysteries for all souls, but especially for a spouse of Jesus crucified, a daughter of the Passion. Silence is what says the most on this day of sorrow. I would like also to call it a day of the glory and triumph of love, but with these words, while the most profound sorrow afflicts my soul, I almost fear to make Jesus recall the sorrow that most afflicted him in his passion; namely, that the triumph of his love was not complete. Jesus wanted to possess all hearts and he gave them even the last drop of his precious Blood. He could do no more, and yet he did not succeed. "When I shall be lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all things to myself," he had said. These were his hopes, and with this he consoled himself as he shed his divine Blood. But this divine call, which should have been a fire to inflame all hearts and achieve the purpose for which he had come to earth, was rejected by many and returned to torment him who had uttered it. It earned him the bitter death of the cross, and continues to do so in his mystical death upon the altar. But be consoled; my heart is yours and will always be yours, since you have made it for yourself. In it your love has triumphed completely. You are its absolute master in every respect.

During the night between Thursday and Friday, our rule states that we should keep a vigil with Jesus in the sepulchre, two hours at a time, chosen by lot, and that each hour we should take the discipline for the period of three *Misereres*. What a night this is for Passionist nuns! Mother Josepha called it the night of graces, a precious night. And truly, Father, by reason of the vow we make (which is peculiar to us) to promulgate or promote devotion to the most holy Passion in the hearts of the faithful, beginning with one's own, we have a special grace of the Lord for penetrating these profound mysteries of love and drawing abundant waters from the fountain of the Savior, which are his adorable wounds, and to pour it on all souls.

[8] This is good psychology and sound theology, for the pleasurable emotions prompt and support the will, but when the will must act alone, its operation must necessarily be a purer and stronger volition. Theologically, sensible consolations readily become an obstacle to pure and selfless love of God, as St. John of the Cross teaches; moreover, the withdrawal of sensible consolations tends to make the will seek help and grace from God and to be more open to his divine intervention.

My vigil was between three and five o'clock in the morning. There were four of us, and two of them were novices. I was silent and as cold as a stone, and did nothing more than consider my nothingness, look for a while at the pictures of the Passion which we had before us, and then at the two doves in white veils, [9] filled with fervor. I offered Jesus their tender love together with my hard heart. But although my heart was hard, it was with Jesus. I did not waste any of that time, as I had promised him.

I spent the morning in a manner similar to that of the previous day. Many times I made the Way of the Cross with the help of a book in order to meditate on the stations. I did the same thing during the Three Hours, which we observe immediately after the little nourishment that the community takes on this day, and all of us on our knees. During the second hour I was interrupted for a few moments in order to give food to a poor beggar, in whom I recognized the dying Christ. With what love I gave him a good glass of wine, hoping to assuage the Redeemer's mystical thirst of love. Almost all day long I wore two penitential bands and I kept bitter herbs in my mouth for several hours. I had also practiced these penances on the previous days.

I do not spend much time describing these physical things because I want to tell you what pertains to the interior of my soul, for I believe that this is the reason God has given me to your direction. During the afternoon my soul remained as it was during the morning, if not worse, because sleepiness was added to the pain and fatigue of body. But I paid no attention to this. I finished the Three Hours; I accompanied Jesus to the cross. I asked him, through his sorrowful death, to grant me to die of love for him, just as, on the previous day, I had asked to live in love. To live and to die in love! Do not think, Father, that by this living and dying in love I mean to spend my life in constant loving delights, in a sweet delirium of love, until the moment that one of them, sufficiently strong, will end my life and transport me to the bosom of God. No, Father, I do not understand it in this way. He who lives in me makes me understand things truly and frees me from the illusions to which so many souls are subject in this matter.

By living and dying in love, I mean that my life should be spent without neglecting a single point of the plans which the Lord has for me and that through his representatives and the circumstances of my life he will gradually manifest those plans to me, whatever they may be: sickness, pain, abandonment, aridity, and so forth, as well as glory and consolations. All these things are transformed into love by love. I desire to live a life of love in this way, until I reach the supreme degree possible to a creature, and then to die in this loving transformation. And although I may die, as my Jesus did, in the midst of the most painful suffering and humiliation, abandoned by heaven and earth, I shall die of love, because everything that brings death to me will be love. This is what I asked of the dying Jesus in my prayer. It is certain that he died of love, but how did he die? I, his poor spouse, have asked to die in no other way but in the state of dryness and aridity.

We finished Matins at 5:30. There were three quarters of an hour of free time that I used by retiring to my cell. Then we again gathered for prayer and my heart remained insensible, although I knew I was united to the Lord. We dedicate the hour between eight and nine to the most holy Mary in her solitude. I read the seven meditations, [10] and my heart was softened and felt some tenderness. I looked at the Blessed Mother with the dead Jesus in her arms, as represented in a picture that we had in front of us. At the sight of the most holy Mary, the sweet magnet of all hearts, the Lord made me experience compassion. I knew then how much it pleases the Lord when souls experience a tender love for his holy Mother while he hides himself from them. It is the Mother who sustains her little daughter Magdalen and teaches her to take the first steps on the way that leads to the summit of the mountain or to

[9] Referring to the novices who, because of their white veils are often called "doves" or "lambs."

[10] The meditations on the seven sorrows of the Blessed Mother.

the interior desert where everything human and sensible disappears and he for whom her soul yearns can communicate himself fully to her. Solitude of spirit, despoliation and isolation from everything human and sensible, the way of faith and blind abandonment — these are what the divine Bridegroom is gently asking of his poor spouse. In my aridity and without my knowing how, the Lord made me understand many things, Father. I shall tell you some of them now, and the next time I shall do so in greater detail.

I realized that in this state of insensibility and dryness the soul does not cease to be united with the Lord and to be loved by him just as it is when it feels his presence and enjoys his love. In the state of insensibility, God is hidden in the center of the soul, to which the soul itself has not yet penetrated and it is ignorant of the fact that the Lord can be there and do great things. [11] Nevertheless, without adverting to it or experiencing it, the soul does understand. I don't know how, but it does. Although it experiences no delight or consolation, the soul finds itself in a state of tranquillity and profound peace and the faculties are at rest. All this assures the soul that God is with it now more than when it feels itself transported by ardent love and those raptures which seem to want to wrench it from the body. The reason is that the less the soul experiences of the sensible, the more disposed it is for God to communicate himself to it. And as he does so, the more pacified are the longings that impelled the soul to him in that other state in which God was able to communicate himself only to a certain degree, while the remaining emptiness made the soul yearn for him with greater ardor. He who is pure spirit cannot fill the soul, which is also spirit, if the soul does not despoil itself of everything sensible, which tends to materialize the soul and thus impede its union with God. [12] And if this does impede union with God, what must be the effect of sin, imperfections and defects?

And thus, the cause of the ardors which sometimes seem to burn and consume me is love that is not yet purified. It is something similar to that which souls experience in purgatory. They long for God, but until they are purified, they are incapable of possessing him and cannot be united with him. I think, Father, that this state cannot last for a long time, because the body is weak and could not endure it. If the Lord does not wish to take me now, he will have to calm my transports somewhat and give himself to me in a different way than he has done in these days, so that my soul can await with greater calm and quiet the hour in which he will give himself to me without reserve.

I do not know, Father, if I have been able to explain all this. I trust that you will understand better from what is happening in my soul, and I shall continue to describe it to you with the grace of the Lord. You know how gently the Lord guides my soul, so much so that it seems that he does not lead and guide it, but lets the soul work by itself in full possession of its freedom. However, that is not so, and the soul quickly realizes it if it departs from him even a little. He guides the soul with a most delicate touch,so that the soul hardly adverts to the fact that it is being guided. Yet that same delicacy and gentleness bind the soul and make it a sweet prisoner of his love.

It seems that I say one thing and then contradict myself. What can I do? These are mysteries of love. I must either say nothing or resign myself to this, since in love there is no order or rule or method; and yet everything is well regulated and ordered, because love regulates and directs everything.

But let us leave the subject of love, because otherwise it will absorb all my time and not let me finish describing how my aridity ended. I have yet to relate the events of Holy Saturday. In the morning, when I arose, my soul thirsted for Jesus and went in search of him. It seemed as if it had been separated from its Supreme Good for years. I hastened to choir at once, but the hour had not yet come in which the divine Master was to let the desolate

[11] This same concept of the center or apex of the soul was very popular among the Rhineland mystics such as Henry Suso and John Tauler and all mystics who were influenced by that school.

[12] This statement is substantiated in the teaching of St. John of the Cross.

Magdalen, distraught with love, hear his lovable voice, although the good Jesus would not delay much longer in letting himself be found. My morning prayer on this day was also dry and without any sensible delight, although there was much peace and tranquillity of soul, which was content with having passed the previous days without consolation and was disposed to continue in this way if it pleased the Lord. But at 9:00 o'clock, when the bells rang, [13] the first rays of the divine Sun shone upon my soul. At recreation after the meal my soul was again as illumined as usual when the Prioress gave me a letter from Father Leon, in which he sent me a lovely holy card of the apparition of Jesus to Mary Magdalen. The Lord used this simple means to make himself seen and experienced in my soul. He seemed to say to me, with divine amiability of heart as Father and loving Spouse: "Peace be with you; *noli timere.*" [14]

How little it takes for Jesus to manifest himself with all the attractiveness of his love to a soul in which there are no clouds to obstruct its view of that divine Sun. One word, heard in passing, the sight of a flower or of any object, a dream, a song, and so forth, can disclose the God who is hidden or concealed in the things that manifest his beauty, power, grandeur, and above all his goodness. Many times the song of a bird has made me experience the presence of God. [15] How sad, unhappy, and unfortunate is the soul who cannot find God in all things and to whom all things do not speak of God or show his love or make the soul feel his presence or hear his voice. If such were the case with me, I could not live; life would be unbearable.

During the afternoon I had the happiness to hear again the words of the minister of the Lord which always console me: *"Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis . . . . augmentum gratiae et premium vitae aeternae."* [16] And thus the Blood of Jesus, washing my soul, disposed it for the pure and genuine joy of Easter Sunday.

I am going to tell you, Father, about a pleasant incident so that you may see how little it takes for properly disposed souls to experience these pure joys. One of the nuns had made a little garden scene in which Jesus was portrayed as coming forth from the sepulchre. [17] Since I am the first one to rise, for I have the duty of ringing the bell to awaken the nuns for Matins, the nun asked me secretly if I would put her Easter scene in choir. I did so, and you cannot imagine, Father, what a pleasant surprise it was for the nuns and what joy it gave them. And when in the silence of the night, in the first hour of Easter, we opened our mouths to sing the beautiful Matins, accompanied by the organ, you cannot imagine with what great consolation Magdalen repeated: *"Surrexit Dominus vere, alleluia."* [18] This is the prelude to the joys that await us when the day of the eternal Easter dawns in heaven with that perpetual and eternal "Alleluia."

Father, bless your poor daughter in the Lord.

Mary Magdalen

Salamanca
April 13, 1923

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he reign always in our souls and by the merits of his Sacred Passion make us triumph over all our enemies, truly die to self and to our manner of looking at things and rise each day to a new life.

I tried to follow your suggestion and see which of us could shed more tears for our Lady and give more kisses to the wounds of Jesus. I suppose that you

[13] Mother Mary Magdalen here refers to the bells that were rung at the intonation of the *"Gloria in excelsis Deo"* in the Mass on Holy Saturday morning in the old liturgy.

[14] "Fear not."

[15] St. Francis of Assisi and Louis of Granada were likewise drawn to God by the beauty of created things.

[16] "I absolve you from your sins . . . . an increase of grace and the reward of eternal life."

[17] This was made after the style of the popular Christmas cribs.

[18] "The Lord is truly risen, alleluia."

surpassed me; if not, you have done badly, because I scarcely had time on account of many other duties. But I did not lack some crosses and trials to offer to our Lord by reason of the magazine [19] and some attacks on it. It seems that the enemy is trying to place serious obstacles to the work of God; therefore, my daughter, ask Jesus and Mary to make truth triumph and to silence its adversaries.

And perhaps I did surpass you in being more confident and not preoccupied with empty fears that someone may know who "Mary" is. [20] They only upset you and prevent you from following the interior movement which is filled with peace, a sign of its divine origin. It is true that it does not pertain to you but to me to decide what is the best thing to do, and I saw that it was best to publish your articles, not under the name of "Mary," but that of her Good Shepherd, "Pastor." This is a name which everyone knows and can be used prudently. So do not worry about anything and soon you will see your writing published without any of the dangers you feared but with the hope of doing much good. Therefore, you can continue writing and then I shall examine what you compose. In case you may be interested, I am sending you this page of verses and echoes from the April issue to see what you think of them.

Without time for anything more and wishing you a great increase of love and holy joy, I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
April 14, 1923

Dear Father:

At the beginning of March the Procurator General of our Congregation came from Rome to pay us a visit. When speaking with him, I asked him if he was acquainted with *"La Vida Sobrenatural"* and whether the article, "The Association of Love for Most Holy Mary," which appeared in that magazine was known in Italy. When he said no, I suggested that he translate it into Italian and make it known, for I thought it would do much good, and I gave him a copy I had been saving. I did not speak with him about the matter again. I was content to introduce the subject and let the Lord do the rest, for I know that this is the best thing to do regarding the things of God — to do the little that is in our power, without any anxiety or preoccupation, convinced that everything good comes from the Lord. He has assigned a time for everything and he likes to work gently and sweetly, if one does not place any obstacle, as often happens, by wanting to anticipate grace and work impulsively.

I left the matter to God and he has acted; how well he has done so, you will see from the letter I am sending you. It is from the Procurator General in Rome, Father Leon. I'll translate the paragraph that pertains to my suggestion, Father, so that you will not waste time in case you do not understand Italian very well. "During these days, when there are no classes, I shall translate, with the help of some of the Spanish students, that beautiful article, 'The Association of Love for the Most Holy Mary.' However, in order to publish it, I think we would need permission from the administration of *La Vida Sobrenatural*. If you happen to see Father Arintero, you could tell him this."

So, Father, please send me a few lines that I can send to Rome and then they will also publish this devotion which aims to increase the love for our dear Mother, Mary most holy, and through her mediation dispose souls to receive graces from the Lord.

How good God is! How many consolations he gives me! A few days ago I

[19] *La Vida Sobrenatural.*

[20] In submitting articles for publication in *La Vida Sobrenatural,* Mother Mary Magdalen was always fearful lest anyone discover her identity. Apparently she had suggested the pen-name of "Mary", but Father Arintero decided to use the name of "J. Pastor", which likely stood for "Jesus, the Good Shepherd." The selection was apt, since Mother Mary Magdalen constantly asserted that Jesus was her teacher in things of the spiritual life.

wrote to a religious who is undergoing great spiritual suffering. She answered by thanking me for the great good that I had done for her soul and said that she prayed that God would grant to me, as to St. Therese, to die of love. This religious does not know me and I do not know her. What do you think of this, Father?

In regard to the article, *"Popule,"* the nuns listened attentively when it was read in refectory. Afterwards they spoke about it at recreation. They were all anxious to know who was the author. What impressed me was the fact that they all turned to me and asked if I knew who it was. Even the Prioress seemed to suspect something. Then they said that when Father Arintero comes again, they shall ask him and he will tell them; therefore, Father, you are forewarned. Nobody knows anything except you.

At the feet of most holy Mary, our Mother, I ask your blessing.

Your affectionate daughter,
Mary Magdalen

10.
DARKNESS AND LIGHT

Deusto
April 20, 1923

Dear Father:

I received your letter and then your post card. When they gave me the letter it was scarcely an hour after I had sent you mine. I am glad you answered with a post card and did not have to bother writing another letter. God bless you for everything and grant you all your desires, especially those that refer to the magazine. The magazine — if it were necessary I would offer my life to God so that it may continue, prosper, and confound its enemies. Do not ever be discouraged, Father, because in life and in death I shall pray for it.

As regards my fears, your letter has reassured me. Your idea was also mine. How the Lord makes us both desire the same thing! Your words are for my soul what bread is for the body. When I am hungry, if I do not eat a good slice of bread, nothing seems to satisfy my hunger. Your letters, Father, are that slice of bread. I do not deserve such a great grace, but the Lord is good and from him all good comes to us. Without him, everything is error and confusion.

And now I want to tell you something that perhaps will make you laugh. While reading your beautiful books and seeing that you quote from so many saints and pious souls, I thought to myself: "Father Arintero must not have read the life of St. Paul of the Cross, for if he had, he would have quoted something from him." His way of thinking and understanding the things of God is very similar to your own. I once found in *Evolucion Mistica* something from St. Paul the Apostle, but I did not see the word "Apostle" and immediately said to myself: "This is my holy Father." Then I realized that such was not the case. If you do not have the life of our holy Founder, I shall gladly obtain one for you. Of all the saints in the past century, I think there are none so close to your doctrine and its spirit as St. Paul of the Cross. Do not think that I say this because St. Paul of the Cross is my Founder, and I love him; it is because I see it this way in the Lord. I don't know why but I have the feeling deep within me that God will unite the sons of St. Dominic and of St. Paul of the Cross very closely. The Passion of Jesus and the Rosary — Jesus crucified and the Blessed Virgin — are two very powerful means and if they are united, with what strength we can struggle and win souls to the love of Jesus.

Father, I don't know why I said this. Someone within me made me say it. But pay no attention to me, since you know that sometimes I write and speak without understanding what I say. This does not bother me, for it suffices that I say what I feel. The Lord will help you understand. I do not desire any other light than that of seeing my nothingness. To know my nothingness — it seems that everything that the Lord is doing in me now is directed to this. In order that he may work freely, it is first necessary that Magdalen disappear, die, lose herself; and in order that she may do this joyfully and without any suffering, God in his mercy makes her see what she loses in losing herself.

Oh Father, how well the Lord does this and how quickly he reveals to the soul, when he wishes, what the soul is in itself — the unfathomable abyss of misery of the creature conceived in sin. At the same time, with paternal goodness he sustains the soul, so that on seeing the infinite distance between itself and its God, it does not become discouraged or die of sorrow; rather, from the depths of its misery it hopefully raises its eyes, filled with confidence and love, to him who is a most loving Father. God rejoices in nothing so much as to see that the soul believes and hopes and trusts in his infinite mercy and goodness without the shadow of a doubt.

In order to show you what I mean, Father, now that I contemplate the calm sea from the shore, I am going to describe a terrible storm through which the

boat of my soul passed for eight or nine days. You have known for some time how my soul reacts in the proximity of sin or danger of sin. It experiences a horror which makes it tremble. In the past I have felt sin to be so close to me (by thoughts or passions contrary to the angelic virtue) that it seemed to be part of me, but by the grace of God it found no response in my soul. You can imagine what I have endured and you will certainly understand it much better than I am able to describe it. What made me suffer most was the possibility that I had been the cause of all this. But I calmed my fears by considering that the queen of my soul, my will, was far removed from this and remained firm as a rock.

In the midst of the crashing waves, Jesus seemed to be asleep, but he was not sleeping. He was lovingly watching his poor bride and she realized it when she heard his voice command the sea and the wind: *Increpavit tempestatem et facta est tranquillitas.* [1] Now, Father, I enjoy days of perfect calm.

Perhaps it will seem strange to you that in such great danger I did not immediately seek your help. Later I shall tell you the reason, and I shall receive with humble gratitude any advice you want to give me, keeping it for any similar situation. I suspect that my soul will have to alternate frequently between war and peace, light and darkness; but both the day and the night, the light and the darkness, equally bless the Lord, and Magdalen will also bless him. In the midst of my fears I never lost my tranquillity and peace, nor did I ever doubt the Lord was with me to guide and direct me if I would let him do so. And here is the greatest danger for many souls: not to let the Lord work in them.

Now, the reason I did not seek your help in this crisis was because the divine Master made me understand that in this situation one must not speak or think; *"In silentio et spe erit fortitudo."* [2] One should remain calm, seeking help in prayer, with faith, humility and preseverance. If I had started to seek explanations or advice by speaking or writing during those days, perhaps I would have started out on a long and painful journey of grievous temptations and (may God never permit it) maybe some sins. Many souls suffer greatly and with little merit because of their imprudence and their lack of confidence in the Lord.

Perhaps you will say: "And you, who have never been a confessor, how do you know these things?" I know, Father, that the sanctuaries of souls are closed to me, but when God gives the light, one can see and prove the sorrows and various sufferings many souls endure with little or no merit (and this is what grieves me) because they do not let themselves be guided by the Lord. They do not trust in him when they need to do so the most, and thus they increase the tempation and diminish the grace that they need so much. This sometimes happens because they talk too much about their trials, even to their confessors. I do not want to imply that they should never say anything, but they must do so briefly and without repetition, for this only impresses the temptation more strongly on the soul, disturbs their serenity, and wastes their time and his. Conscience speaks to everyone and each one is master of his will. When these two faculties reassure us, a few words are sufficient. It is much better to speak of love, which alone can give us the strength to persevere in temptations for as long as God wishes.

During the days of my crisis I confessed two or three times, but I was tranquil as always. I said only a few words about it and nothing more. I did not reveal my state of soul to the confessor because I intended to do so to you. As for the nuns, no one was aware of anything. I maintained my usual cheerfulness externally, so much so that during those days the Prioress repeated what she often says to me: "You don't know what suffering or

[1] Luke 8:24, "But he arising, rebuked the wind and the rage of the water. And it ceased, and there was a calm." A similar temptation occurred in the life of St. Catherine of Siena, who afterwards asked: "Lord, where were you when I was so sorely tempted?" And Jesus replied: "Catherine, I was in your heart."

[2] "In silence and in hope shall your strength be."

spiritual trials are, and you cannot sympathize with anyone who has them." How often we creatures are deceived! Jesus and Mary knew everything, and for me that was sufficient.

How often I kissed the wounds of Jesus during those days! I begged him to wash me, purify me and strengthen me with his precious Blood. And in my visits to Mary Immaculate, I asked her not to let me rise from her feet, but let me stay there until death, rather than stain my soul with sin.

At the feet of Mary, our sweet Mother, your poor daughter asks your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
June 18, 1923

Dear Father:

How many things I must tell you and how many things I must omit! May the Lord be blessed for everything and may his holy will be done always. This is what gives me strength, grace and peace. My soul rests in his will and finds there everything that it needs.

Jesus has asked many sacrifices of me. While waiting for the glasses, which had to be ordered from Paris, and being forbidden to read or write without them, I had to be content until now with looking at your beautiful books in the hands of others. But thanks be to God, the glasses suit me fine and I believe that I shall be able to read and write without any difficulty, if they permit me. I have written to Monsignor Volpi about the magazine and we shall see what he says.

It is now a little more than a month since the Lord granted me the great consolation of speaking with you and once again what great need I have of opening my soul to you, Father. Could this be self-satisfaction or self-love? I think not. If the Lord has united our souls, it is for the consolation of both of us, so that this consolation, which reveals his goodness to us, will impel us to run toward him with greater fervor.

For that reason I was a little surprised that you did not tell me that you experience this same union, although you did not deny it either. Perhaps in this you were not being open with me. You recommend that I should be so with you, but you do not act that way with me (excuse me). One need never fear what the Lord does, but only what we do, because that is the only thing that can harm us. That we should experience joy and consolation in this union is natural. In his admirable prayer before the beginning of his Passion, [3] Jesus prayed that one day we should all be one with him. This prayer of our loving Savior should make our hearts feel more strongly the impulse they already have toward God and the desire to be perfected soon in that unity. Only that union is capable of satisfying all our aspirations. So it is not strange that we should feel consolation in our union in him, since it is the beginning of a union we ought to form with our God. Thus, one can understand very well that the more souls live united among themselves, the more they begin to enjoy even on this earth that blessed union which is without equal.

This and only this is the reason, Father, for the consolation we experience. Once God has permitted the heart to taste the ineffable sweetness of his love it cannot find consolation in anything else; for that reason I am sure that you understand it better than I. I speak to you with sincerity and I also say that your loving presence which so greatly consoled me during the days that you were here, your words that gave me so much light, your writings which do so much good for me — none of these suffice for my heart. I need God, all of God, without reserve and without intermediary. Everything else both consoles and afflicts me; it satisfies me and at the same time makes my soul experience more strongly the emptiness which only God can fill. Your presence, which so greatly consoled me, is not that of God but of his minister in whom he is reflected. Your words speak to me of God, but you do not give

[3] That is, the prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper.

me God; you teach me his ways, but you do not make me run along those ways as I need to do. You open the door, but you cannot lead me into the beautiful chamber where my Love dwells; much less can you place me in the arms of the Spouse to be embraced by him as I desire. Therefore, whatever the creature gives and even the most that it can give is little, very little. It makes one experience a profound emptiness which torments the soul which is already suffering the sweet torments of love. This and nothing else is the consolation that I desire to find in my relationship with you: to realize more and more that nothing outside of God suffices for me and to experience ever more deeply the emptiness of everything and to disdain everything.

The thought once came to me that when the Prioress mortifies me by making me wait to mail my letters or by not giving me time to write as much as I would like, perhaps it is because she fears I am seeking my own satisfaction. But if she thinks this, what can I do? Nothing; leave it to God. Once I spoke with her about the good that my soul receives under your direction and she said: "You have found a good grandfather," meaning that you took an interest in me out of goodness and love. I replied: "It is not he; it is the Lord, who is showing us how he takes care of souls who trust in him and put themselves in his hands."

It often happens, and I have observed this on various occasions, that superiors or spiritual directors often do or say things for a soul's good without realizing themselves what they are doing or saying. This happens so that it may be evident that they are instruments and nothing more. In this regard I want to tell you what the Lord made me understand one day when I spoke with you. Once, when I was still in Italy, I went to Father Germain to discuss with him the affairs of my soul, and with the same confidence with which I speak with you. I don't know why, but I had difficulty expressing myself. He recognized this and told me in the very same order everything that I had planned to tell him. I was greatly impressed and amazed, and I asked him: "Father, who told you all this?" He answered: "A few days ago Jesus spoke to me about you here in the chapel." I was very much consoled. I considered it a predilection of the Lord toward me and I thanked him.

But this does not happen to me as far as you are concerned, and yet I am perhaps more satisfied. The Lord has given me to understand that he acted that way with Father Germain because the faith that I then had of seeing God in his minister was more imperfect than the faith I have now. And the Lord usually gives grace to his ministers to direct souls in accordance with the degree of faith with which these souls approach them. If God acted then in an extraordinary manner, it was to supply for my imperfection. But now that my faith is greater, the ordinary grace that he gives is sufficient for those who direct my soul.

So you see, Father, how different are the things of God from the way they appear to us. If I had had more light at that time, instead of rejoicing I would have humbled myself. But the Lord in his infinite patience and goodness is not dismayed at this; little by little he increases his divine light for our weak eyes until they see the truth clearly and fully. Both in Father Germain and in you it is God who speaks, but I am more content and secure with your words because they are received with a stronger faith.

From the answer you gave me when I asked about your state of soul, it appears that the Lord wants you to go by the way of faith, which is the way I want my soul to go also. How greatly impressed I was by your words! Of all the words I have heard from your lips, I think that these have done me the most good. I was candid about this, Father, and now let us see who will advance more quickly. As yet I have no experience; but if I bump my head, you will cure me.

I give infinite thanks to the Lord because now you know my soul. If such were not the case I could easily make a mistake because it would be even more difficult to explain myself. I told you something of this when you were here — how I prefer to listen to you than to speak myself, for I think I can ex-

plain the state of my soul better in writing, as you have told me several times. But to tell the truth, even when I write I'm still not satisfied, although that does not matter as long as my articles please you. If you are content, so am I.

For some time now my soul is almost habitually submerged in the abyss of nothingness and even less than that, because faults, defects and imperfections still remain in me. I feel crushed and humiliated before the Lord, and as at other times I could not find words to speak to you about God, now I must tell you the same, to let you know my great misery and weakness. It seems impossible for me to describe my impotence for all good. I discover faults, defects, imperfections, in everything — in what I am doing now and in what I have done in the past. Nevertheless, all this leaves me in a state of great peace and tranquillity; and in the center of my soul there is an unwillingness to leave this state, because the more I am nothing and see myself as nothing, the more God is everything and everything is his. And the more wretched I am, the more merciful God is. To glorify God, I am content to be little, miserable and reduced to nothingness.

This work which I believe God is doing in my soul (you can be the judge), is greatly aided by the Prioress, who feels obligated to scold me for my failures. I know that this causes her pain, because she will call me later and speak kindly to me as if she fears that I may be sad. But I am not; rather, I am very content and I prefer that she treat me this way, because I see that it helps the Lord and he wants it this way. This kind of treatment serves to alleviate what I feel interiorly, but when I am treated with sweetness and esteem, it causes me to suffer more.

Sometimes people come to the parlor and ask the Prioress to see me because it does them good to speak with me. A few days ago a young girl, who was experiencing great spiritual suffering, said that she would like to confess to Mother Magdalen and open her soul to her. This does not surprise me at all because in the state in which I am, I see that there is absolutely nothing of good in me; so whatever good comes from me is from the Lord. That is what does the good and penetrates souls, giving to each what it needs. I have no particular lights concerning souls (except on a few occasions) but usually I am able to penetrate souls (I don't know how) and I understand what they need. I love them and I am prompted immediately to do whatever good I can for them; if I cannot, I suffer.

How many souls need only a few words of light and truth, but their directors do nothing but burden them with the oppressive weight of obligations concerning external actions, mortifications and penances and impose such strict custody of the senses that they seem to find sin in everything. Poor souls, how I suffer for them! I think that a time arrives when the soul has to be left free, or rather, not be weighed down with precautions concerning external things or made to practice the virtues by force. None of this is of any use for their spiritual growth or for attaining the peace of soul that they need, and this is the first thing that has to be sought in order to do any good for them. I would tell many of them to abandon the externals and strive to maintain a tranquil spirit in the hands of God by acts of sweet abandonment, confidence and love. In this way they would dispose themselves to do at the proper time whatever God asks of them, and without any force, because when he asks anything, he gives the corresponding grace. Then, if any force is required, it is changed into a sweet joy and a necessity which the soul has of giving proof in this way of its love for the Lord. Father, when I begin to speak of souls, how many things God presents to my mind. I almost forget about my own soul. I feel that I have to do something, a great deal.

In the days when the heaven of my soul was obscured by that storm of which I spoke in my last letter, the Lord gave me to understand in advance that I would have to experience something of all the miseries, trials, weaknesses and difficulties which are encountered on the path to sanctity, so that my heart would be fashioned and prepared for spiritual maternity by experience. Then I would be able to have the sentiments of a mother for all

souls and they would be able to come to me with confidence, knowing that whatever they were experiencing, I also had experienced.

But let us return to what I was saying about my present state of soul, because if I get off on this discussion I shall never end; there is so much that I could say. I have to curtail my ideas because I see that I am filling pages and it seems that I have not said anything. Jesus makes me see that now he wants me to accompany him in the degradation and humiliation of his Passion. In this way the soul is made ready to pass from the human to the divine, from Jesus to God, since he is the way; and this way is filled with humiliations, sufferings and trials. If I am faithful during this period, I believe that later I shall receive the hidden manna. But even if he were to give me nothing, I am not concerned about that. It suffices that I please him, and his pleasure now is that I accompany him in the humiliations of his Passion as his faithful spouse.

Thus, Father, it is not I who suffer the contradictions, humiliatons and rejection that the Lord permits me to experience at each moment, but Jesus in me. The only thing that I do is not to reject them but to accept them joyfully and unite myself to him. Jesus suffers from them and offers them to God through me in satisfaction for my sins and to purify my soul, because otherwise they would have no value for attaining so great a good. This, Father, is what produces much peace. This is what it means to be united with Jesus. Also, in the moment of humiliation, instead of becoming discouraged and losing confidence, this is what fills me with trust, gives me strength and makes me realize that *"omnia possum in eo qui me confortat."* [4] The more wretched I see myself, the more I hope to do great things, because then it is God who does them; and since he is the Creator, he needs nothing. But everything esteemed as anything is an obstacle to the works of God.

I was speaking before about my carelessness, which obliged the Prioress to treat me with some severity. It was not voluntary, since I always try to do everything well, but was usually the result of forgetfulness or error. Thus, one day because I had forgotten the command given by the Prioress, the chaplain started Mass before the nuns were summoned by the bell to come down to chapel from the upper choir, and this caused a little confusion. After Mass the Prioress corrected me severely, accused me of disobedience, and as a penance, commanded me to announce my fault to the community at recreation. I did this very willingly, considering it a special grace which the Lord reserved for me, since the Mothers [5] do not usually receive public penances. These are given if at all, to the novices or junior professed who have not yet completed five years of profession. Apart from the Prioress, I am the only Mother, so I am more closely observed and more obliged to give good example. I have some fear because of this, Father, for they do not see my interior, but only my faults and defects; and evil is so contagious. Sometimes I make a mistake in counting the Hail Mary's in the recitation of the Rosary, I am not punctual in intoning the psalms, I do not hear when they call me, and other things of this type. Only the Lord knows the hatred I have for sin and even light sins or involuntary imperfections. At the same time, I am much consoled in thinking that as God internally reveals to me my misery and imperfection, the Prioress does the same thing exteriorly when, carefully observing my actions, she doesn't let anything pass and discovers faults even in the things I try to do as perfectly as possible.

Father, what mysteries are these? I feel united with God and at the same time it seems that an immense distance separates me from him. For two things to be united, they must be equal; and I have never seen such inequality between God and my soul as I see now. At the same time that I feel impelled to say with St. Peter: "Lord, depart from me, because I am a sinner," I also say: "My God, nothing outside of you suffices for me, and no one

[4] "I can do all things in him who strengthens me."

[5] In some contemplative communities the term "Sister" is used for novices and the junior professed, while the term "Mother" is reserved for the nuns in perpetual vows.

but you can give me what I need." Between these two powerful tendencies or aspirations, I cannot tell you, Father, whether my soul rejoices more or suffers more. At the same time that it experiences joy, it suffers greatly. I am greatly consoled in telling you this because I know that you understand. I cannot speak to anyone else in this way.

Once a holy priest of the Lord said to me: "Most superiors will have to suffer a good purgatory for not having given religious sufficient freedom to treat of the matters of their soul." I did not pay much attention to this at the time, but now I understand that this is so, because it is just that the Lord should make them pay in purgatory for what they have caused souls to suffer by taking from them the freedom that God himself gives to them. I do not say this, Father, from my own experience; on the contrary, thanks be to God, when I ask permission of the Prioress to write to you, she answers very willingly: "Yes, write to him." What the Prioress does is call me every little while when I am writing and ask me to do a thousand things which must be done at once so that only God knows the number of times my ideas are interrupted and I have to start again. But still, they are things of God and it is his holy will.

In conclusion, I want to tell you something that gave me much consolation. One night, on returning from Matins, I was with St. Therese of the Child Jesus. I dreamed that the figure of this beloved Saint appeared to me amid an arch of flowers which formed a niche in which she stood. She told me many things, and we prayed and sang together. What most consoles me and what I remember most clearly and distinctly is that she spoke about the Association of Love for Mary. "While on earth," she told me, "I also used to make a visit to Mary every day, and now in heaven I unite myself with all of you (members of the Association) and make the two visits." I do not give any more importance to this than what is given to an ordinary dream, but it consoled me very much.

I ask your blessing, Father. Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
July 20, 1923

Dearest daughter in the merciful love of our Lord:

May he ever reign in your heart and enable you to recognize more and more your own misery in order to keep you ever at his sacred feet, on which you press your lips as you await all things from his divine mercy, as did your holy patroness, on whose feast day I greet you and wish for you the love and spirit of prayer that was hers.

I am pleased, my daughter, that you never resist the means that our Lord uses to call you and lead you to himself, but that you judge them only in terms of what there is of him in them and whether they lead to him. Do not rest in anything but him, repeating: *"Mihi adhaerere Deo bonum est."* [6] In this way you will find him in everything, even in the reprimands which oblige you to confess your faults and detach yourself more and more from creatures and from self. You will even find him by resigning yourself to your own nothingness and your inability to correct those little faults which come to light, hoping for a remedy from him alone and that far from permitting them to scandalize or disedify others, they will serve rather to establish all in mutual union, tolerance, and concord. Do not be discouraged or afflicted for any reason, because everything is for your greater good and that of the entire community.

In case of doubt, have recourse, if only in spirit, to those visits to the Mother of beautiful love, of grace and of mercy, and you will see that there you can find life, health and a remedy. And when you feel so inclined, do not hesitate to unburden your whole heart to this poor father or "grandfather" whom our Lord has provided for you and in whom he wants you to have such confidence. Accordingly, that he may help you to detach yourself from

[6] "It is good for me to adhere to my God."

everything and be raised up to God, do not hesitate to say whatever occurs to you, with the confidence and simplicity of a child. And although, as with a child, it may be necessary sometimes to scold you or give you a light slap, that should not prevent you from returning with the same confidence.

I almost have to do that now, when you tell me that I was "not very open" but I had asked you to be so. But you have already asked pardon for your childishness and it is already pardoned. Surely you must have learned that parents cannot always be as open with their children, and especially not with little girls, as they would sometimes like, because they will probably tell everything. And you know that while our Lord is wont to give them certain graces in which they surpass men, few women excel in being reserved. And so you women yourselves much more readily entrust your secrets to a man, and moreso if he is a minister of God. You know that it is little effort for us to keep them well guarded, while women, although they may be very good persons, will probably reveal them. Just a few days ago I disclosed a certain matter to a very holy woman of valiant character in whom I had much confidence, asking her to regard it like a confessional secret, and she said that she would. I don't know why she did it, but later she uttered certain statements that caused me serious annoyances. So you see, my daughter, where certain types of openness lead.

Nevertheless, in asking you to be as "simple as a dove" and at the same time "prudent as a serpent" with God's representatives, in whom God himself inspires your confidence, I feel obliged to be the same in regard to you, confident that our Lord will give you the grace to keep an absolute reserve. And I must add, my daughter, to my confusion, that because of my sins, laxity and lukewarmness, in spite of speaking and writing so much about mysticism and feeling myself attracted to it and being convinced (I don't know by what light or superior power) that in general what I have written is the truth; in spite of rejoicing to see that this has done good for many souls, and being disposed to make any sacrifice to perform this service for them and thus give glory to God; in spite of my continued conviction that if we are slow to attain those graces, it is only through our own fault; I regret very much to tell you with all sincerity that I have not yet experienced the grace of intimate union with God or even perhaps a moment of the prayer of quiet. My best prayer is: *"Ut jumentum apud te."* [7] And in order that I understand this well, the Lord frequently permits a spirit like that which tormented you recently for a few days to persecute me tenaciously, and without my experiencing the abhorrence that I should. Therefore, when I recall the *"Adducentur Regi virgines post eam,"* [8] I see that I am nothing but a donkey which our Lady uses to carry pure souls to our Lord and I rejoice in that. I could hardly be admitted to his loving presence, since I must always remain in the courtyard or in the corral.

Now you see, my daughter, what a father you have. Nevertheless, I enjoy dealing with souls that are united to Jesus, because although he does not do so directly, he lets me experience him through them and even to know whether they please him or sometimes to judge whether the spirit that animates them is good or evil. I experience the fragrance of Jesus in my desire to follow his aroma, though I have not yet merited (and if you good souls do not share it with me, perhaps I shall never merit) to taste and see how sweet is the Lord.

Pray for this, my daughter, out of the charity that you have for this poor sinner, if you are not ashamed now to have him as a Father. That is why I like the devotion to Merciful Love, because only in the infinite mercy of our Lord and through the mediation of his most holy Mother can I find a remedy. This also prompts me to edit and begin to publish in the October issue the articles, "Sanctity is Love." Perhaps these articles will make an impression on my soul, so that I may finally "sanctify myself in truth."

[7] "I am become as a beast before thee."
[8] "After her shall virgins be brought to the king."

For your part, continue with the same courage and the same generosity, for I see that you are proceeding well. I rejoice and perhaps grow in the love of Jesus by hearing you unburden yourself of whatever spiritual "childishness" occurs to you. Pray much to Gemma and the little Therese that they will help me become truly childlike and cease to be what I am, to see whether our Lord will at last admit me to his "kingdom of love."

Wishing you every manner of grace and happiness, I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Your affectionate and humble servant in Christ,

Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

P.S. I shall rejoice if your sight continues to improve.

Deusto
July 25, 1923

Dear Father:

I received your very dear and precious letter on the eve of the feast of my patroness. I was thus able to offer her the flower of waiting to read it until the following day.

In your words, Father, I experience the power of the word of God and they penetrate my soul to give me strength, light, and support. As I read your letter I rejoiced and I paused to give thanks to the Lord for what you told me, for I saw it as a sign that God hears my desires and supplications that he should make both of us saints. Yes, Father, I pray to the Lord that the beautiful doctrine in your books be substantiated by the sanctity of the author. God gives me such a strong desire for this that I am sure that it will be fulfilled.

One of the surest signs that we are proceeding along this path is the recognition of our nothingness. Formerly I thought that the more one advanced in perfection, the more he saw his defects and imperfections disappear and the lighter became the heavy burden of the body. But the Lord has made me understand that this is not the case; on the contrary, the more we approach this divine Sun, the source of all perfection and sanctity, the more light our souls receive, and its brightness reveals even more our nothingness, misery and corruption. And so I am content to see myself as imperfect while my eyes are fixed on the perfection of God and his greatness. Yes, Father, whatever the means the Lord employs, even if sometimes he must use them energetically to attain his end, especially with persons with much talent and learning, they are immense graces which he gives us and should be regarded as such. If one does this, I believe that he will give more glory to God in that way than with all his writings and works. Therefore, instead of being ashamed, I rejoice and give thanks to the Lord for having given me a father who so resembles the Apostle to the Gentiles and who does not glory in his vast learning and profound knowledge, just as St. Paul did not glory in his sublime revelations but in his infirmities and miseries. Always write without any fear, Father. Your letters are protected in a special way by the Lord who walks with us and until now has always seen to it that your letters come directly into my hands.

The needs of your soul, Father, I regard as my own: that we both become saints. God wishes this and recommends it to me in a special way. And I trust he will give me the grace never to be a source of annoyance as was the person of whom you spoke in your letter. God entrusts many souls to me; and that I may receive them and place them on the path of confidence and love, he enlarges the bosom of my soul and heart and gives me the maternal feelings for sympathizing with all the miseries, struggles and conflicts which so many souls suffer. And he enlarges my desire to help them all by acquainting them with devotion to Merciful Love. In that and in the Mother of Mercy I place all my hope.

Mercy — how much my soul needs it! Jesus made me experience his absence by passing rapidly through my soul and then leaving it in a vast emptiness and profound solitude. But I know that nothing or no one can fill this

emptiness except him, and therefore I prefer a thousand times to remain alone and empty of everything rather than seek consolation and relief in anything else.

Solitude of the soul – how many mysteries are contained here that no one can explain! It is the bridegroom who leaves, without saying good-bye or where he is going, when he will return or why he is leaving. I would like to leave also and run foolishly in search of him until I find him, as did the spouse in the Canticle of Canticles. But I stay here waiting calmly and peacefully, as if Jesus were not my spouse, my love, my all, and as if I were able to live without him. What is this, Father? I want to be unable to be without Jesus, to die rather than remain cold and indifferent without him, not to have the patience to wait for him, and yet I do wait peacefully, and this makes me suffer.

One day, when I was very united in spirit with the Blessed Virgin and was trying to understand this state of my soul, I thought: "Can it be that Jesus is not content with me because I am unfaithful to his love and his benefits? Could I have displeased him in some way and he has gone to take delight and to rest in faithful souls?" Some things came to mind in which I could possibly have displeased him, and I accepted his absence in peace, as a punishment for my faults and imploring his mercy. I was thinking this way when suddenly I seemed to hear the words: "Seek him as if you did not have him." I felt the presence of the Lord and I understood that he was in my heart. But immediately I no longer experienced him and I was in the same state as before. I have said that Jesus passes quickly through my soul, but it is not always so quickly, although it seems so to me. With Jesus time has no measure and all time is but an instant, but the hours that I spend without him or do not experience his company seem like an eternity to me.

Without Jesus nothing satisfies me or seems good. I remember what you told me some time ago; namely, that Jesus does not always let himself be experienced, that sometimes he hides himself, and then everything seems lost, like a dream, or something that does not exist. I have not forgotten, Father. Your words are engraved on my mind, but they do not suffice to console me, because immediately the thought comes to me: "Yes, he said that to me then, but now, who knows whether it is so or whether there are other reasons?"

When one finds himself in this state, it seems that the only consolation is faith; that is, to remember what faith teaches; namely, that God never leaves the soul and although the soul does not experience his presence, he still thinks of it and loves it. This consoles me, as do the words of him who speaks in the name of the Lord, but they must be recent and repeated as often as one goes to him. What he has said a long time ago is not sufficient, at least not for me.

When I do not experience Jesus, I try to work in the same way as when I do experience him, with the help of faith and try to do what I understand from faith is pleasing to the Lord. It is more difficult, but it leaves no less peace in the soul than the first way and gives little or no satisfaction to self-love. But one should pay no attention to self-love. Let it scream, and keep going. Jesus wants it this way and we must be content with the manner in which he treats us, for it would be a sign of pride to seek any other.

In these cases it is a good remedy to remain before the Lord as you do — *sicut jumentum* — and to know how to do this is no little thing. Would that I knew how to do it, Father. The donkey always has its head down. I, on the other hand, when I have been in that position for a little while, lift up my head, I shout, I act like a child, and then I am heard. But it must not always be this way because that would mean that I must always be a little girl; and I don't want to be a little girl as regards love; I want to be an adult. I like the love of Calvary, the love that unites me to my divine Spouse on the wood of the cross, but it seems that suffering is not my path.

They tell me that I have two heavens, one in this life and one in the other. Nevertheless, I understand that there is an interior suffering to which Jesus

invites his poor spouse, assuring me that this suffering, though not seen by anyone, is the most suitable for disposing my soul for union with God. This is the suffering that made the dying Jesus say: *"Quare me dereliquisti?"* [9] But in spite of this, he also said: *"In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum."* [10] What courage the soul must have to commend itself to him who seems to have abandoned it! This is the supreme degree of faith and by the same token the supreme degree of love. To confide one's soul, one's spirit, the most precious thing one has, into the hands of him who does not answer one's cry of suffering — what great love! This is the way Jesus loved, and to this same love he invites the soul that desires to be united with him. These, Father, are the heights which the Lord has been pleased to make me understand to some degree: to see and to contemplate them in souls so that afterwards he can lead me to them *fortiter et suaviter.* [11]

From what you tell me about your own soul, I believe it is directed by God to this end. Your soul, Father, is not in the state that you think. Your doctrine and your great experience (permit me to say it) do not suffice for you to know this. The Lord disposes it this way, for to apply one's own lights and doctrine to oneself would be very dangerous. Continue to think of yourself as a donkey; but this donkey should remember that he has wings, and when the Lord wishes, he will make him realize that he has them. Your poor daughter does not have wings or even the first feathers, but waits for them from the mercy of God and with the help of the Father Director that God has given her. Meanwhile, she will continue to repeat: *"Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbae et volabo et requiescam?"* [12]

Do not be surprised, Father, that a poor, ignorant woman should speak to you in this way. The Lord uses anyone he pleases to console and encourage his servants. If it were not he, how would I dare to do this? In the eyes of God and his ministers I see that I am small, vile and wretched. Nevertheless, this poor woman, at the same time that she is disposed to make an act of humility in not protesting your self-accusation and thereby deprive you of great merit, dares to suggest some things that she has learned from experience are efficacious aids when the soul is tormented by the evil spirit. First, strive as much as possible to keep peace in your soul, for if the devil succeeds in disturbing this even a little, he has already gained a great deal. Then, proceed in all things with holy indifference and without fear, attentive only to one's duties, which one already recognizes and is accustomed to fulfill. Even the fear of offending God, though good in itself, can be dangerous here. If fear succeeds in preoccupying us to the point of destroying our peace and bringing disturbance to the soul, we must get rid of it at once; otherwise, one is caught in the net and can escape only with difficulty from that sea of fears and anxieties in which so many souls find themselves because they do not know how to defend themselves. Once peace and serenity of soul are lost, we are half conquered, because God's delicate communications with the soul are interrupted. As soon as one's peace is disturbed, they cease at once, and this is the greatest loss. *"Non in commotione Dominus."* [13] This is the principal target at which the attacks of the enemy are directed.

It also helps to be kind and affable to persons with whom we associate, up to the point that they think that we are enjoying the most delicate consolations of divine love. Actually, that is the case, and they are not mistaken, since those things are pledges of the love that God has in store for us; but first he wants to purify us and make us worthy of him. It is also good to kiss the holy habit with the intention of renewing one's vows and to have recourse to Mary with expressions of love, without stating the reasons for our invocation. This is not because of a lack of confidence, for she knows and she is not vexed at our reserve. On the other hand, I do not think it is good to perform

[9] "Why hast thou abandoned me?"
[10] "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."
[11] "Firmly and gently."
[12] "Who will give me wings like a dove, so I can fly and be at rest?"
[13] "God is not present in disturbance."

extraordinary penances for this purpose; when the soul is already much humiliated. One's ordinary penitential practices are of greater value and they suffice, without adding any others. Prayer is also beneficial and perhaps more than anything else — to turn to God as if we needed only love. And finally, to kiss the mantle of Mary Immaculate and the wounds of Jesus.

How powerful these kisses are when given with faith and how much they say! Fix our lips on those mouths of love — the wounds of Christ — which will seal the doors of our senses with the blood that flows from them; and when the devil is roaming around, he will not dare to approach. To facilitate these kisses, which give us so many benefits, and to be able to give them more frequently, without being prevented by our association with other persons or the lack of time, they can be given spiritually by closing our eyes for an instant and in spirit placing our lips on Christ's wounds in order to receive light and strength from them. By doing this, Father, you will see that the enemy departs quickly. I shall not discuss this further, in order that I may state some of my needs and ask you about some matters in which I fear I may have displeased Jesus. If so, I wish to amend my life so that Jesus will not depart from me, since I cannot live without him nor do I want to be able to do so.

I found in your book, *Cuestiones Misticas*, the following quotation from Father Osuna: "When, in preventing something from being manifested externally, the interior operation also ceases, it would not only be a mistake to suppress it but I think it would be a sin of resistance to the Holy Spirit." Have I been guilty of this, Father? I knew that this was not a good thing to do, but I feared the consequences. Even when I felt ill (ill in the sense of spiritual well being), I have never liked to say *"Juge dilect mi,"* [14] and I have never said it; rather, I would exclaim: "Lord, more love, and even if I die, it does not matter." And sometimes I would repeat"Oh Jesus, carry me to a place where no one will see me, to a solitary and hidden place where the human eye cannot penetrate. There I shall say to you: 'My Jesus, you have conquered. I am overcome by your love. Do with me whatever you wish. Wound me, take away my senses — I gladly consent to everything'."

I have been saying this since more than three years ago, when my poor heart did not have you to unburden itself. And how my heart suffered! "O Jesus," I said to him one day, "wound me in the center of my heart and leave the wound open so that no one will see it but I will always suffer for you." I told the confessor and he advised me that it would be better not to pray for this, so I did not.

But I have always desired this and sometimes I have thought that perhaps Jesus had done it to some degree because I felt in my heart a pain that I cannot explain. It is a spiritual pain, not a physical one, of which you will recall I have spoken on other occasions. Whatever the Lord does pleases me and I want it, but no one should know anything about it. O the secrets of love; what enchantments they hold! If they were to continue as formerly, I do not know if these secrets could be kept.

One day at recreation the nuns were speaking of a very simple priest who once said to a nun who fell asleep in choir that it was a mystical sleep and she should not be concerned, because it happens to many and they feel guilty because they do not know how to distinguish it from natural sleep. We all laughed at this and one nun said in jest: "How I wish I could find someone who would tell me that. Then, when I am sleepy, I could sleep in peace." The nun who said this suffered a great deal because she had to exert great effort not to fall asleep. And the nuns started asking each other who had to struggle the most not to fall asleep. When they asked me, I answered: "Thanks be to God, I do not suffer from sleepiness, especially in choir. I have neither mystical sleep nor natural sleep." But one of the nuns, a very alert person, said immediately: "The other night at Lauds, I noticed that you could not pray and were supporting yourself in order not to fall. Surely you were sleepy

[14] "Wound me, my Beloved."

then." Actually, it was a mystical sleep; it was the Lord; but to conceal it I said: "It may happen now and again that sleep overtakes me." I said no more in order not to become involved, because sometimes they make me say what I do not want to say, and then I am sorry. But as far as you are concerned, the thought has sometimes come to me that the Lord wants me to tell you that you can use anything that you think would do good for some soul. Then I am afraid to tell you this, and even if you suggest something of this nature, I am silent.

I am afraid, Father, that this may be an imperfection. I would not have this hesitation if I could be sure that no one would ever know anything or even that Magdalen ever existed. This is no problem in regard to persons who do not know me, but such is not the case with those with whom I live, for it would be easy for them to identify me by some phrases that I use.

I seem to hear you say: "How this blessed daughter rationalizes! It shows little trust in God or her director." Yes, that is true, so do what seems best with my articles. Use them as if they were your own. I only ask that you change the phrases that come from Magdalen so that they will not reveal her identity and she can remain dead to the world and live only for the love of Jesus.

Another thing I fear is that perhaps you would prefer that I write in a different manner so that you can better make use of my articles. If I write about the things of my own soul, it is because this pleases me, and that could be self-satisfaction. Father, if you think that there is any imperfection in this, tell me, and I shall correct it.

Another thing; in my desire to mortify myself, I began to eat less bread, which I like very much, and I was doing this for some time until the oculist told the prioress that the pain in my eyes was due to anemia and the weakness had affected my vision. She then commanded me not to fast and to eat more. During this period of eating more, I tried to restrict the bread, simply because I like it so much. But afterwards, when I am hungry, I am not able to mortify myself. Do you see how many imperfections I have?

This morning I commited an act of curiosity. Immediately the Lord in his infinite goodness made me feel his presence and with it a great sorrow for my fault. Later the Prioress told me to go to the garden to pick some beet leaves. While I was doing this, I strongly felt the presence of God, who humbled me and revealed to me my numerous infidelities. I said: "O Jesus, mercy; wash me in your redeeming Blood. *Tu es Deus salvator meus, in te sperabo.*" [15] I thought afterwards that the Blood that flows from the wounds of Jesus was gathered by the angels in vessels of purest gold and to ask it for my sinful soul would be to profane it by contact with my stained soul. Then the interior voice of Jesus said to me: "These fountains of my wounds have been opened to wash and purify souls." And so, when I have committed any fault, what confusion my soul experiences when it feels the presence of God! I almost prefer not to experience it.

I would like to ask about something else which I fear does not please the Lord, and although it is the most important, I cannot make myself put it in writing. I shall save it for when you come here, and I hope that you will do so in October, as you did last year.

I am writing the notes on Mother Josepha as you requested, and am explaining everything that my conscience tells me I can and ought to say. I would not want to displease anybody. Therefore, have the charity to ask the Lord to give me prudence, intelligence and fortitude, because I have to speak of some very extraordinary things; and you already know that all the things of God must have their adversaries. Let us have the courage to work for the Lord. For my part, I join you with my childish efforts.

Father, your books are doing much good for souls. God has bestowed on them an attraction, a divine perfume, to draw souls to his love. We have in our monastery *La Evolucion Mistica, Cuestiones Misticas and Grados de*

[15] "You are God, my Savior; in you I hope."

Oracion. All who have read them have felt renewed in spirit and encouraged to become saints. We do not let them out of our hands. To interrupt the reading of them is a sacrifice.

Let us work, Father. In heaven, you will rest and I shall work in order to make your doctrine understood.

I do not want to end without saying that I am preparing two little seven-year-old girls for their First Communion. I shall make these two new tabernacles a gift to the most holy Virgin, one from you and the other from me, so that God will give us the grace to give him souls in great number.

I beg your blessing.

Your affectionate daughter in the Lord,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
August 15, 1923

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be always with your soul and, although hidden at times, as his games of love require, he takes delight in your soul. In his absences may the sweet Mother of beautiful love console you and teach you how to conduct yourself. May she dispose us to die of love, as you wish for both of us.

I am very grateful to you for your good filial advice, which has consoled me greatly and helped me no little. Thanks be to God, you have greatly calmed the storm, although I do not know how long it will last. But let it be as God wishes, since *"homines et jumenta salvabit Deus."* [16] The trouble is that my whole life is so spiritless that it serves more to discredit the doctrine than to support it. And there are some who throw this in my face, as has just been done in a magazine which supports opposite doctrine. My daughter, see if you can obtain from Jesus, for love of his holy Mother, that in the future this will not happen and that we may both be truly holy.

For your part, be at peace, totally abandoned to Love, because in this way you empty yourself of everything to be filled with him. You do well to wait peacefully when he withdraws, accepting everything as a medicine or just punishment which will free you from purgatory and dispose for greater union. *"In silentio et in spe erit fortitudo."* [17] You do not sin when you conceal what is necessary in order not to attract attention to yourself or to avoid complications, as long as you strive interiorly to follow the divine movement and not suppress it. And when you do not experience it, hope and believe in Love, resolutely follow your path and follow the counsel or advice that I have given you. It should be of use at that time as well, although it may seem to you to be something entirely new. Accept it, even if for you it is only a sheaf of myrrh. When you feel moved to do so, you may surely ask the Lord to wound or pierce you or anything else that he suggests. And when you feel the need to unburden your heart to me, do so with all freedom and as best you can, without being concerned about anything else but to please God in everything.

Regarding that which may be profitable or useful for other souls if it is more or less edited — it is up to me to judge. You need not worry about it, but leave it in the hands of God and of him who represents God. In this way you will be properly disposed if I ask you to rewrite something in another form. But I should advise you that other persons, who have experienced the same interior movements, have written accounts in an impersonal form so that I can publish it without recasting it. They always write with the same freedom as if they were writing for me alone; and they know that if something is not exactly right, I will correct it.

As regards eating, since you are now in a weakened state, you ought to obey blindly what the Prioress and the doctor say, without looking for penances beyond your strength, with which you could nullify the divine plan. Place yourself under those fountains of the Savior and you will receive health and

[16] "God will save men and beasts."

[17] "In silence and in hope shall your strength be."

strength that you could never obtain by penances or with any kind of effort.

With this I believe I have answered everything, and if not, you can ask me when I see you. To tell you the truth, I don't know when that will be, because, unless there is a special reason, it would be difficult to do so very soon.

In regard to *Custiones Misticas*, which Monsignor Volpi requested, the book is being translated by one of our Fathers in Rome. But since it will take him a long time, he has summarized the most essential parts. These show that the mystical life is for all because all those who thirst are invited by our Lord to the mystical waters, each one in his own time and in his own way. Everyone should not follow the same formula, but each one should obey his director. The evil is that some directors close the door instead of helping the soul to enter. This is what you can respectfully suggest to the Monsignor, for although he is very spiritual, he seems to be somewhat influenced by Father X, who believes that not all are called to the mystical state. This is also reflected in the book *La Buena Voluntad*, as if good will alone, without being totally possessed by the Holy Spirit, or attaining the passive or mystical state, could suffice for intimate union with God. The truth is that as a result of the communication of the Holy Spirit, who takes full possession of souls, it is no longer they who live; hence, the need for directors to know the ways of the spirit in order to help and not hinder.

Greetings to the Prioress and all the nuns. And those little girls you have been instructing — may our Lady and St. Michael preserve them in their innocence. I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

11.
GAMES OF LOVE

Deusto
August 24, 1923

Dear Father:

I am sending you the enclosed article and shall continue to write in the same style as time permits and as the Lord gives me light, for I am an ignorant person and everything has to come from him. In this way also I shall fulfill the desire you expressed last year; namely, that I enlarge on the topic and divide it into sections. Please tell me frankly whether or not you approve of it.

I am pleased with what you said about my previous articles — that they seem to have been written by a man. I hope that this article will merit the same, and if you put "Pastor" as a signature, it will signify that it does. I prefer that, because then the articles can do more good than with the name of a woman. The fewer the names of women as authors, the better for the magazine; and the same is true regarding the biographies of holy persons in the magazine. I have heard it said that you always publish those of women, usually Spanish women; but to receive much credence, they have to be saints and doctors, and the only one is St. Teresa of Avila. That's what they say; but I believe that even without being saints or doctors, but humble souls who seek only the glory of God, the Lord can use and in fact does use them sometimes as instruments for carrying out his designs and for doing great things.

The article I am sending you expresses what I experience in the hours of solitude when my soul seems at times to be completely overwhelmed. They are interior things that spring from the heart and provide relief to my soul. Also, I have just finished the report on Mother Josepha, which the Procurator General requested. He will soon be here. I spoke to you about this in my previous letter. Before I give it to him, I would like your opinion about some things I have said, because I fear I may have been imprudent or, what is worse, failed in charity. For example, I have described an incident which Mother Josepha told me in confidence: A voice from a crucifix expressed displeasure with a superior of the monastery, saying: "I suffer with the sick because of the lack of charity of the infirmarians, but the fault is that of the superior, who is not vigilant." And to verify the incident, I had to name persons who are no longer alive. Although I have tried to say only what was necessary and to do it with Christian prudence, I foresee that if they put it in the biography of Mother Josepha as I have written it, some persons will doubt it. For my part, I am at peace because it is not creatures who will judge me but God.

When I have finished reading *Cuestiones Misticas*, do you want me to read the works of St. John of the Cross?

Asking the Blessed Virgin to bless you and to shelter us both under her mantle, I ask your blessing.

Your affectionate daughter,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
September 2, 1923

Dear Father:

Thank you for your last letter. May God reward you for such goodness and consideration toward this miserable creature, who does not deserve that anyone should be concerned about her except to say to her: "Ungrateful, unfaithful sinner."

I wrote to Monsignor X to tell him your views and I translated for him a paragraph of your letter. I hope it will bring good results. I agree with you in everything, Father. I am a poor, ignorant person and it does not pertain to me to judge and discuss these things; but my soul thirsts for truth, and when I

find it, I immediately sense it and my soul is at rest. Have courage, Father. Love is truth, truth is in your doctrine, and truth and love are always victorious.

I would like to speak to you about my soul. There is much I could say, but since you gave me no hope that you will visit us soon, I decided to ask you some things I would have preferred to tell you in person, assured that you will speak to me as if Magdalen were not your daughter. Before I knew you, a confessor once said to me: "I am inclined to ask you to write your biography, not because you are a saint, but because the way the Lord is leading you is very gentle and easy and perhaps it could be of help to other souls. No one would need to know who is the author, because many good things are said without our knowing who said them." I answered with a *"Fiat mihi,"* [1] not desiring anything but what God desires. (Father, I truly felt indifferent about this. Everything in me is so simple and ordinary. God is all goodness and mercy, but I am filled with countless infidelities. How much time I have lost because I did not promptly open the door of my heart to love!)

The confessor concluded by telling me that he would pray so that God would enlighten him. I also prayed, but I prayed that God would take away this idea, because I had no inclination to write. I don't like to do it because I have a heavy hand; it takes me a long time, and I write badly. After some time, the confessor again said something to me about this, but neither did he at this time command me to do it. If he had, you know that my vow of greater perfection would have obliged me to obey and be silent. But the Lord, who knows all things and works with infinite delicacy, does not permit anyone to command me to do anything unless they first think over the matter very well. This is the way he takes care of those who abandon themselves to him without reserve and without fear.

On another occasion I spoke to the confessor about some things that I do when I feel most united to God. In telling him these things, I was trying to do him some good. The poor man is so timid and fearful that it grieves me. I would like to enlarge his heart, which is good and well disposed, for he is a humble man and has self-knowledge. This is the way I always act when I think that some good can be done for a soul, moved by the sentiment of St. Paul: *"Caritas Christi urget nos."* [2] I know that what I told him pleased him, because he said to me: "I think it would be good if you could make some notes on these things so that they could help you when God withdraws his light. They would also be helpful to others." But a little later he said: "Let it go for now, since your eyes are bothering you and it may be harmful for you." (This was before I used glasses; now my eyes do not pain me.) I thanked God that once again he delivered me. Since then I am fearful that the confessor will ask me to do something of this nature, so I try to say nothing or very little. But then I wonder if this manner of acting or this attitude may possibly displease the Lord. What do you think, Father?

I believe that the confessor has noticed something, because for some time now he dismisses me more quickly. He even said to me: "I proceed carefully with your soul, partly because I see that the Lord himself is working in you, and partly because it seems that others are advising you." He does not know that I am corresponding with you or that I have revealed my soul to you completely. I wonder if it would be better, with your approval, to tell him frankly how the Lord caused me to meet you and to understand that I should entrust my soul to you. I have no greater assurance of anything than that God wishes that a son of St. Dominic should direct my soul. I say this although it may seem confusing. So, if you agree, I shall tell the confessor at the first opportunity. I am sure that he will receive it well. He is good; he knows his obligations and he fulfills them. He has a delicate conscience and knows very well that in these things there must be freedom as well as the obligation of acting without any purely human consideration, lest one obstruct the plans of

[1] "So be it" or "Be it done to me."
[2] "The love of Christ impels us."

the Lord by not using the means which he in his goodness specifies for the sanctification of each soul. God has traced out a plan for everyone, because he wants everyone to be a saint. One's failure to do so is always the result of not using the means that are proper to each one as arranged by his paternal hands.

I ask your blessing.

Your affectionate daughter,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
September 6, 1923

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be always with you and in all things suggest to you what is most pleasing to the Father.

I received your letters of August 24 and September 2, and I answer today because I am free. We are about to begin our retreat and I ask you to pray earnestly to God that he will make me entirely his. On September 24, I go to give a retreat to the Benedictine nuns at Alba de Tormes. There, near the tomb of St. Teresa, I shall ask that she fill us with her spirit so we can serve our Lord with zeal like hers and win souls for him.

I was very much consoled with what you said about my doctrine, encouraging me to continue because you sense that it is in conformity with the truth. Other good souls also sense this and it encourages me to sustain and clarify the doctrine, in spite of the contradictions by some of the sons of St. Teresa, although others, and especially her daughters, are encouraging me as you are. [3] Therefore, I would be happy if Monsignor Volpi would write something to the effect that God invites all to sanctity but only a few enter this way because, instead of help, they receive opposition from their bad directors, who do not enter themselves nor allow others to enter. Also timid souls who in other respects are very good, are frightened at the prospect.

It would be well not to unburden your heart to those who tend to make you fearful; and if you do speak to them, it should be rather to encourage them. I believe, if that good priest who is so humble and meek would not take it badly, you would do well to tell him clearly that you already have a spiritual director in whom God desires that for the time being you should find peace and therefore you feel that you should rely on him. It is not necessary to tell him that your director is this poor "donkey," although it does not matter to me if you think it prudent to tell him.

As regards what he told you about writing your spiritual history for your own good and the good of other souls — this seems to me to be an inspiration from God. You would do well to consider it that way and prepare yourself to do it as soon as you have finished the other things that you have already started and may be more urgent.

Your outline on the canticles of divine love is a good one and you can proceed little by little as you receive illumination. The article on sacrifice, or the spirit of sacrifice, is ready to be published under the name of "Pastor" when we have finished the articles on sanctity, which I will begin in the November issue. Say whatever you feel and do not worry, because although some things may seem badly stated, with little effort everything can be presented very clearly. Perhaps that is the main reason our Lord disposed that we should meet and know each other — in order to help one another without prejudice to each one's particular vocation. Do not fear anything, but follow the path that the Lord is tracing for you, since he knows what he is

[3] At this period Father Arintero became involved in a long and lively controversy concerning the universal call to sanctity for all Christians and the possibility of "acquired contemplation." Vatican Council II has amply justified Father Arintero's position in its statement in *Lumen Gentium:* "All the faithful of Christ, of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity."

doing and he is the Master of all. And do not hesitate to reveal whatever is in your heart, for if there is anything that needs modification, it is easy for me to edit it so that no one will recognize you as the author.

Regarding the articles which the Procurator General requested of you, once you have written them with all Christian delicacy, without saying more than is necessary and relating things that are, I presume, more or less known, I do not think you have anything to worry about. You can always ask him, since he is more practical and knows what ought to be done. For now, in this first edition, supress the name of all convents, persons, and especially your own name, since this could cause reactions which would impede the fruitfulness of the work. If it is necessary to identify anyone, it would be better to do so later; but for the time being, if you see that there may be a fault against charity in revealing any person's hidden defects, then at all costs the name of the person should be suppressed and replaced simply by N. Then you will not have to worry. Accordingly, if, after commending the matter to God, you see that some person's name should prudently or charitably be suppressed and you should give only the initial or simply N., then do so. Then, if the Procurator General thinks the name should be given, he can do so if he wishes.

In your spiritual reading, always read what most inspires you or what seems to be suggested to you by the divine Guest. When you finish reading the book, *Cuestiones Misticas*, if you feel inclined to read St. John of the Cross, you would do well to begin with *The Dark Night* or the *Spiritual Canticle*. I do not think that for the time being you should read *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*. What is always necessary is that you be more and more inspired to follow faithfully the paths of Merciful Love.

I am sending you a few leaflets and I hope you will like them. Nothing more for today.

With respectful greetings to the Prioress and all the nuns, I commend myself to their prayers and I bless them.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
September 18, 1923

Dear Father:

I did not intend to bother you until you returned from your preaching in Alba de Tormes, but I do not know how long you will be with those happy nuns, who will be able to listen to your words for so many days. I want to tell you about the letter from Monsignor Volpi and ask your approval and blessing in order to begin the translation that he requests. Thanks be to God, he seems willing to do something, but he understands little Spanish and he wants to understand the spirit of your writings. It is well that he should do so. I hope that you will approve of my doing the translation, although it will cause a delay in doing the articles you indicated in your last letter; but with God's grace I shall get everything done. I would like to fulfill Monsignor Volpi's request as soon as possible and then perhaps we shall be able to have an article by him in the magazine next year.

The Superior General and the Procurator General have been here for some days. The latter, after reading the report on Mother Josepha, said that it is well done. I explained to him my fears and my desire to omit names, but he said that I could be reassured that there would be no fault against charity and that these things would be of much benefit to souls. However, they think it would be prudent to wait for some time before publishing the biography because there are complications.

He also told me that the article on the Association of Love has been translated but that the editor of the magazine in which they wish to publish it would like to know something of its origin. Afterwards it will also be translated into French. What a great consolation this is to me, Father. I think that

much good for souls will result if it is promulgated. Recommend it also to the nuns to whom you are going to preach. In regard to the origin of the Association — perhaps you will tell me to say frankly how it started. I am willing to obey, but with much repugnance. Before you can tell me to do so, I ask you not to, because I am sure that there can be no benefit in this; rather, something may be lost. Father, close your eyes to the light of this world and you will see what I shall accomplish with your doctrine and my (our) Association of Love for Mary. Now they are seeds under the ground, but they will sprout and grow and produce fruit.

Concerning my soul, which I so desired to open to you, what shall I say? The Lord has asked a sacrifice of me. I had written three pages on the history of my soul, as you desired, but the Prioress told me that I should not write more than two, because perhaps Sister Pauline would also like to write to you. Patience!

Jesus comes and goes; he makes his presence felt and then hides in silence as if he were not there. I do not know what he is doing or what he will do with his poor bride. For some days I have been experiencing the presence of God very strongly. This very morning, at the first stroke of the bell for rising, he made his presence felt in my soul and asked for my love. From the bottom of my heart I said to him: "O Jesus, I love you; I love you. Come to me, fill me with yourself; absorb my whole being, live in me so that my life may be your life." And he willingly granted everything, for he desires nothing but to live in us and work in us the prodigies of his divine love.

What wonderful things love can do! If I could tell you everything — but it is impossible. Silence says the most about the things of God. Silence attracts my soul because it is the language of heaven. "There," the Lord says, "when all have been made one with me, we shall understand each other perfectly in perfect silence." On earth it is necessary to interrupt our silence, and what a pity, when we see that human speech so greatly dimishes the mysterious operations of love. But all the aspirations of our soul must be completely satisfied, and this desire for silence is the one I feel most keenly at the present time: to be able to understand each other without saying anything.

Talk wearies and depresses me, but silence in God — what things it tells me! I understand this when the divine light illumines the darkness of my soul. What I see and understand then, Father! I see and understand my nothingness and my greatness. Do not be surprised at the phrase, "my greatness," because it seems that the Lord makes me say it. Many souls, because they do not believe or because they doubt that the goodness of God is so great that he gives infinite riches to his creatures, shares with them his own greatness, his divine being and all that he has — because they do not believe this, they deny God's attributes of mercy and liberality. For that reason, Father, I said "my greatness," without any fear, because what I mean is that I believe that I have received great gifts from God; and because I believe that he has given them to me, I call them mine. I shall try to explain it better. The Lord makes me understand my nothingness when he withdraws his light and leaves me to work without knowing what I am doing, making me feel my incapacity for everything. Sometimes I cannot even conceive an idea or think or reflect; I can only see things in a confused way without knowing anything distinctly.

When I go to confession, it often happens that I have not been able to make an examination of conscience and I have to say to the confessor: "Father, I feel guilty of many sins, more than at any other time, but I don't know how to tell you because of the darkness that obscures me and prevents me from knowing anything distinctly."

I repent of everything, but calmly, because I know that if one becomes upset at seeing oneself so wretched and incapacitated, it is a fault against humility, and I do not want to commit that fault. I want to resign myself and realize, that if I do not have light, it is because I do not merit it and the Lord is right in not giving it to me. This often happens to me even in regard to material things. It seems that I cannot reflect or take those steps and measures

that prudence dictates. To work without reflecting seems to be the actions of a fool, but I am not distrubed, because I see that in their own time the things of obligation are done and, thanks be to God, almost always well done. Several times the nuns have commented: "Mother Magdalen seems to have no desire to do anything, and yet at the proper time everything is always done." And so it is. But then I have to tell myself that I had no part in this, because I did not even seem to have the will to do anything well; the Lord did everything. And this is what the Lord wants to be said or what he himself says when he puts my soul in this state. Tell me, Father, if what I am saying is anything similar to the state of your soul. I think that it would be helpful for me to know and helpful for you as well. Have confidence in your daughter, without any fear.

Convinced of my impotence, I experience my greatness because God lives in me and what is his is mine. And he wants me to call it mine, without fear. I experience the greatness of my ideas, my aspirations, my desires and affections. I feel that nothing temporal can satisfy me because my soul needs the infinite and the eternal. I experience greatness in the sublime flights of thought which enrapture my soul. I experience an indescribable immutability, permanence and (I don't know if I can use this expression) impeccability, as God himself is impeccable and immutable. This awareness gives me peace and joy, but also suffering at seeing that, while this should be the state of all souls, it is so in very few.

Some days ago I learned about two religious who do not live according to their state. It caused me such pain that I don't know how to tell you, Father, what my soul suffered. I experienced such a pressure or restriction of soul that it seemed as if God were squeezing it with his divine hands. I offered it as a prayer for mercy for those religious.

Father, through the sacrifice and peaceful immolation of our spirit under the hand of God, let us endeavor that our souls be more united each day. Let us forget ourselves and cast ourselves upon God, letting him work in us through our fidelity to the slightest movement of his grace. The more we love God, the more we shall help each other, the more we shall live in union with each other and the better we shall fulfill the plans of the Lord. To this end it is of great help to consider our greatness, as I have just explained it, especially when the burden of our bodies troubles us and makes us aware of its corruption. The day will come when we shall discard this bothersome burden and then our greatness will be free to enjoy God fully as we desire; meanwhile, patience and generosity.

I shall end now, Father, greeting you respectfully in the name of the Prioress, who is very devoted to St. Teresa. When I told her that you were going to Alba de Tormes, she asked me to request of you a special prayer. Pray also for your daughter, who humbly begs your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
September 21, 1923

Dearest daughter in our Lord:

May he always be with you and do with you according to his heart's desire.

Although we are on retreat, I hasten to answer you to approve and bless your projected works, hoping that they will be for the glory of God.

As regards the state of your soul, the little you told me consoles me greatly. Remain at peace and take courage, letting Jesus hide himself, fleeting like the deer. Let him play with your soul as he desires in order to make you love and desire him more; then he will return soon to give it greater proofs of his love. And one of the most estimable is the security he infuses into your soul as a pledge that you are his, his forever, and he will never let you escape, however much he withdraws and makes you suffer from his absence in order to purify your love. Take courage then, and trust that our Lord is sufficiently powerful to fulfill his promises. While your soul experiences those desires for God, it is

clear that he looks on it as his beloved daughter; and the divine filiation he is communicating in greater and greater measure will preserve it from sin, as St. John says.

And the incapacity for everything that he causes you to experience, together with the interior assurance that ordinarily he will do everything or see that everything will be done in its time, is another proof that he is taking greater possession of your soul and wants to be your all in all. He will be that in the measure that you abandon yourself to him, trust in him and let him work in you.

With my blessing.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Artinero, O.P.

Deusto
October 7, 1923

Dear Father:

How many things have happened to me, interiorly and exteriorly, these days! And although my heart is filled with them, my letter will be somewhat brief. The Prioress has asked me to work on something that she wants to offer to the Superior General in November for his golden jubilee. I have been working on it for two weeks and shall have to spend another week at it; therefore I had to suspend all my writing. What I am sending you now was inspired by God for some souls that he has in mind and perhaps a little for you.

If you knew, Father, what the Lord is doing with this poor soul! It seems that he wants to take it and then suddenly he leaves it, and the soul both suffers and rejoices. There are moments in which I think that it could not have greater joy in heaven, moments in which my soul enjoys God as if I had no body. These are but brief moments, however, for when the soul again experiences the heavy burden of the body, it suffers a great deal. Then I say: "Lord, what are you doing?" And he replies (without words but making me understand): "I am goodness by essence and I feel the need to communicate myself to my creatures. I rejoice when I meet souls in whom I find no obstacle to this."

Lord, what are you saying — that in me you find no obstacles to your love? It is because your mercy hides them, covers them over so as not to see them. Yes, the Blood of my Jesus covers my miseries and is offered to you in order to draw me with it. You could do this with all souls. Then why do you not do it, Lord? And I understand that it is because many refuse. They cannot believe that they are so loved by God; they think they are unworthy of his love because they are so poor and wretched. They do not consider that God in his goodness loves and does good to all without distinction and without seeing whether they merit it. If he were to look at this, few or none would find him. I wish, Father, that all could see in me what my eyes see: past and present wretchedness. Then I am sure that no one would ever be disheartened or would doubt the love of God.

Let us never be guilty of this great ingratitude, Father. In your last letter you spoke to me of the state of your soul. It is well that you should see yourself as poor and miserable, but there is no need to stop at that. I also see myself this way (as I have already told you), and it is natural to do so. But we should not on that account doubt for a single instant that we are very much loved by God. I am going to tell you something for your consolation. When I feel most united to God, I experience a greater union between your soul and mine. This is a clear sign that God keeps your soul closely united with himself, because I find and experience those who are united with God, when I myself am with God. Use this, Father, especially when God seems to be using you as a "donkey," to ask him for greater love and fidelity (dare I say it?) because you have great need of it in order to correspond to the great love that God has for you. I said "you need," but perhaps I should say that we need to correspond with all generosity to the number of graces received, more than sufficient for us to become saints.

The greatest and most delicate secrets of divine love are those which the Lord works in the interior of souls, those whom he enables to understand these mysteries. In his goodness he does this with us. We are his most intimate friends. It does not matter whether God reveals these secrets by himself or by means of other souls through whom, as you have said, he makes himself felt. I repeat: that does not matter. All good is from God, and it comes only from God. His also is the light by which we recognize it and receive it. He who does not receive this light will remain cold and insensible before the greatest marvels of divine love.

To do things according to God and to be faithful to grace, I sometimes use the reflection that I have just written. I say "sometimes" because ordinarily I am not able to do anything, but to act foolishly, almost without being aware of what I am doing. I would not like to read in the life of some saint that he acted in this way; that he spoke, thought and worked in this manner. It would be immediately evident that he does not understand sanctity and cannot help us attain our goal of winning souls for Jesus. If we wish to make God loved, it is necessary that our life help others the way the lives of the saints help us — as examples and models; otherwise, all the desires we have to do great things for God and for the Church will be an illusion. This is what the Lord gives me to understand, and excuse me, Father, if I speak in the plural. The desire that I have for the good of both of us makes me speak without thinking. I am the one who needs to reform my life and watch over all my actions so that I will not corrupt them by the defects or imperfections I see in myself.

I give evidence of these imperfections of mine in everything. My words are often spoken without consideration, with little sweetness and too hastily. When others speak to me, if I have understood the first time, I have no patience to hear it again if they start to repeat it. Immediately I say that I already understand. The Lord reprimands me for this defect, especially when I speak this way to the Prioress. I also have defects in my manner of walking. I should walk with more gravity and modesty and not, as I often do, in great haste. The same thing is true of my work, and Jesus wants me to be preoccupied with nothing but "the one thing necessary." I also have defects in eating, sleeping, seating myself. Sometimes I forget that one must not give to nature everything that it wants, but always deny it something, and not seek the better or the most comfortable, as I sometimes do without even thinking. Father, I would never finish if I were to tell you all my miseries and imperfections. And the worst thing is that I neglect to practice virtue or to maintain control over myself. The Lord wants to do everything and he does not let me be preoccupied even with this. I do not know what my life is or what name to give it. You can figure it out, because I don't know how to describe it.

In spite of all this, I feel that Jesus loves me, that he loves me very much and is pleased with my poor love. Some days ago I was painting some flowers and he looked at me, asked for my love, and seemed to say to me: "I am the most beautiful flower, look at me." And he took possession of my heart, my mind, my will, and said to me: "I am the Master of your entire being." And he made me experience it. Then, Father, the mysteries of love begin. Jesus lives in me — in me, with all my defects. How monstrous! How horrible! God, who is sanctity by essence, cannot be united with imperfection. And what happens then? I dare to impede his loving action in me in order to work imperfectly. This, Father, is where one realizes the malice of sin and the great evil of any voluntary imperfection. This is where the abyss opens before our eyes to humble and confound us. Then we are not only beasts of burden, but scourges of God. Yes, by our sins we have dragged Jesus from his eternal throne of glory and nailed him to the cross. And it is sin also that drags him from his throne of love in souls. By our sins we renew the bitter death of Jesus and the sorrows which pierced Mary's afflicted heart, thus making all those sufferings futile. These abysses show us what we are and make us lose much in love and in suffering.

I must end now because my work awaits me. I shall leave for another time the other things I wanted to tell you. In heaven I shall tell you everything.

As a final note, I wish to say that our confessor is no longer with us because he was named master of novices. I see in this, so far as it affects me, an arrangement by the Lord to put me entirely in your hands. Now, Father, do with me as King Nabuchodonosor did with the three children. Cast me into the furnace of divine love so that in the midst of the flames I can intone the most perfect canticle of praise to God.

I ask that you pardon me for my manner of writing if I have failed somewhat in the respect that I owe you.

Humbly begging your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Salamanca
October 22, 1923

Dearest daughter in the merciful love of our sweet Savior:

May he reign always in your soul and find his delights in it. May he reward with new flames of love the good that you do for me by your letters.

Surely he wishes that we should mutually help each other and need each other; so I bless the hour in which his divine providence disposed that we should consult and understand each other so well. I trust that if we do not become unworthy of his mercy — which for my part is something to be feared — he will not permit us to be separated. And if he were to permit this, it would be to keep us more closely united forever in his Sacred Heart.

Yes, my daughter, I was much consoled when you said that you feel closer to me when you are more closely united with God. May he be blessed for everything. Sometimes when the enemy persists with his evil suggestions or takes me by surprise, I fear that I have been unfaithful to God because I was not diligent enough or prompt to do battle. In my prayer life I am somewhat careless and not sufficiently alert to the enemy who "roams about seeking whom he can devour." Therefore, my daughter, ask Jesus not to let me out of his hand, but to hold me firmly, like a child, and give back to me the joy of his salvation, strengthening me with his Holy Spirit so that I shall never put any obstacle or resistance to the work of his love and mercy.

As regards your state of "foolishness," let us both bless the Lord for that grace, which is no small one. Not only one saint, but all saints always worked in this way, possessed by the divine Spirit who did everything in them. Formerly they worked in God; they proposed things and took counsel; but now God works in them and plays with them according to his good pleasure. And in this state anything they would want to do by their own efforts would only impede the divine work in them, since it is not now they who live, but Christ lives in them. By not doing anything except let him work in them and then obey his gentle movements and inspirations, they please him in everything. Then, when they must perform a duty, he moves them to it; or rather, he leaves them free to do in his way what seems best to them.

As regards the defects of which you spoke, do not be concerned, but tell our Lord to correct them. Meanwhile, be content with recognizing and experiencing your own nothingness as you await the remedy from him, so far as it is in his hands; and avoid anything that is not in accordance with his good pleasure. He will make you feel or recognize this by a certain spiritual sense. *"Probantes quid sit beneplacitum Deo."* [4]

The divine movement will often cause you to do and say what you were not intending, and by its good fruits it will be evident that it did not spring from yourself. And since I must make a judgment about these things, never hesitate to tell me anything that occurs to you, for our Lord knows how to make everything profitable. For your part, let him play with you as he pleases, now touching the center of your heart and then withdrawing, because these are the ways of his ardent love for his poor creatures.

[4] "Proving what is well pleasing to God."

I liked your article and I hope to publish it soon.

Pray that Jesus will give me greater love and fidelity. Be at peace and have courage. I bless you and recommend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto,
November 5, 1923

Dear Father:

What consolation your letter gave me! And how could I not experience this consolation on seeing that my last letter caused you to praise and bless the Lord? I did the same, Father, on reading yours. Yes, I have praised and blessed the Lord on seeing how your soul receives his grace without stopping to consider the means or the instrument by which he gives it to you. And I have also blessed the Lord because your words always make me better realize God's goodness to me.

I am grateful to you, Father, that you make me see my defects and miseries and also the graces the Lord in his goodness bestows on me. And now, using the freedom you have given me, I shall do the same for you, because a knowledge of both the one and the other is an aid to our sanctification. Sometimes it is good to pause at the second, that is, the goodness of God, and to cast our miseries on it so that they will be consumed and we shall no longer see them. It pleases the Lord when souls acknowledge the gifts that he gives them, instead of closing their eyes in order not to see them, under the pretext of humility. If he gives his gifts, it is that souls may grow in all the virtues, and especially in humility. Since his gifts are meant to produce these effects, they cannot do any harm to the soul; rather, the more they are known, the more deeply and efficaciously they work in the soul. All the fears which souls sometimes have in this regard are distorted ideas of petty souls who do not live in the truth or acknowledge it. But let us live in the truth, because there is no other path as secure as this one. God is all; we are nothing; but in him we can do all things and are greater than all things. In the things of God there is no deception or illusion; if there be any, it is only for those who do not understand them in truth, but in a human way.

Let us praise and bless the Lord, Father, that by his mercy we are on this secure path. Few there are — even less than one would think — even among spiritual persons, who live completely in the truth. Occasionally what you call "carnal prudence" permeates the spiritual and many persons do not want to abondon it or be persuaded that the things of the spirit must never be looked at with human vision. That is why there are so many who teach without knowing what they are talking about.

I repeat, let us praise the Lord, because we have good reason to do so. And since we should become a "perpetual praise of God," let us begin immediately. I have no words, Father, to tell you as I would like, what God does in me. I see that with infinite goodness he is gradually fulfilling my desires and then stimulating other greater desires, to be fulfilled at their proper time. If you only knew, Father, where my thoughts fly. I shall tell you something. I have asked the Lord that all those who associate with me or have any contact with me should grow in divine love, and if this is not to be, that I may quickly break with them; since even if there were no other evil involved than the loss of time, that itself would be a very great evil, because time is short and precious.

I ask this grace for both of us, although I believe that the Lord has already granted it to you. I realized this from the first moment that we spoke together. Our ultimate end is God, and our role during our passage through this life is the same as that of Jesus: to enkindle fire in hearts and then, after our passage through this world, to leave behind the sweet odor of Jesus in order to continue our mission even after death. And Father, that is when I shall be able to realize all my great desires!

Once the future was revealed to my mind and I saw a multitude of souls who gave themselves completely to God and loved him because they were led by us to his love. In view of this, all labors and sufferings seem as nothing to me. My heart is filled with an ocean of joy and repeats with holy ardor the beautiful canticle: *"Magnificat anima mea Dominum,"* [5] and I say to the Lord that in heaven, on my palm of victory, I want to write: *Maria*. Father, we shall both do the same, shall we not? With what joy we shall show to all the citizens of heaven our banner of victory with the name of our sweet Mother through whom we have triumphed and from whom we have received so many graces. I often say to Jesus: "My Jesus, make me a saint for the love and glory of your Mother." You should say the same, because to mention his Mother to Jesus is to touch the most sensitive part of his heart so that he will grant us what we desire.

Father, what do you think of my foolishness? Are these dreams of excessive imagination? Sometimes my poor mind is not able to think of anything. Jesus hides himself and his light also. Then I am afraid, I feel my great weakness, and I don't know how to desire anything. I still desire only God, but I feel incapable of doing anything for him or of thinking of my "foolishness," which gives me such consolation.

I shall tell you something more. Now that God has given me someone with whom I can communicate, certain of being understood because he knows that it is not necessary to analyze things of the heart but to understand them with the mind of Jesus, I shall unburden my heart as much as is necessary. I found, Father, in the *Vade mecum* of Sr. Beniga that Jesus said to her: "The world is running toward the precipice, but I shall halt it in its frenzied rush with a little nucleus of generous souls who will do battle under my direction." Since reading this, the thought sometimes comes to me that I shall be one of those blessed souls. I believe it because, from the moment that God puts anything in my mind and makes me desire it fervently, it seems to be a sign that he wants to grant it to me. I have already told you how he fulfills my desires to make him loved, to communicate to others the fire that he has enkindled in my heart. Now I shall tell you how he fulfills another desire that I revealed to you some time ago; namely, to be a director of souls.

You know, Father, that this desire does not come from the fact that I think that I am more competent than others to whom the Lord has confided this delicate and difficult task. It is not even necessary for me to tell you this, because you know what my motive is: to make God loved, to make known to souls the way of love. I do not know anything else and maybe I don't know this either, because if I knew how to love God I would know everything and maybe my heart would not suffer so. In spite of my desire, I have never on my own initiative dared to enter into the sanctuary of souls to which only you, the ministers of God, have the key. But God has entrusted some souls to me and I shall tell you how he did it.

When our confessor was about to leave, he advised some of the persons under his direction, who were saddened at his departure, that they should come to me once in a while for a spiritual conference. He even asked the Prioress to permit it, because it would be good for them if I could speak to them; so now they come to me and they open their souls as they would to an expert director. When they come, the Prioress tells me: "Mother Magdalen, go and do whatever good you can." And if, when I go, I find myself in that aridity and dryness of spirit in which I am not able to say a word, I tell myself that it is God who commands me and therefore I have the same reason to expect his grace as his ministers do — his will, his mandate, the fact that he entrusts these souls to me who are the treasure of his heart and the price of his Blood.

The first thing I try to do in all my affairs is to assure myself of the will of God, and I do this by leaving it to superiors and to circumstances to dispose of me, without interjecting myself. Once we have been reassured in this way,

[5] "My Soul magnifies the Lord."

we can proceed in peace, confident that the divine assistance will not be lacking for us to be able to work for the glory of God. Father, what things the Lord reveals to me on this point! How much is lost and how much the works of God are impeded by not being guided according to this principle! Sometimes a person refuses to give himself to some small action, perhaps something as insignificant as a grain of sand, without stopping to consider that perhaps — or maybe certainly — this failure of his will cause many others to follow in his wake and will destroy some great work for the glory of God. O Lord, what a life is theirs who see things only through their physical senses, without realizing that what gives true life to all our actions is the will of God. Without this, all our works are dead and they vanish like smoke. And even if they seem to endure, when one closes one's eyes to the light of this world, he will see nothing but the terrible emptiness of nothingness. This is what awaits those who do not have as a norm for all their work the will of him in whom we all live, move and have our being. Truly, Father, these things frighten one and they should cause greater fear than the foolish things that occupy so many souls and make them fearful. At the same time, it is a great consolation to faithful souls to know the admirable order by which divine love disposes and regulates all things.

What a terrifying mystery is the will of God, and also the will of man, who by his free choice can impede and divert the will of God. But although they are mysteries, the Lord gives me light concerning this matter and he has made me understand it in some particular circumstances. I shall relate one. We had ordered the book, *The Mystical Evolution*, and since a long time passed and the book did not arrive, we asked the portress to buy it for us. And the very day that we did this, the person from whom we had first ordered the book brought it to us. The Prioress said that we could not buy two copies. I found it rather difficult to have to tell this to the person who had been so kind as to deliver the book; but it was the will of God and I did it. Perhaps if I had insisted a little, I could have convinced the Prioress that we should keep both books; but then what a great good would have been prevented, because the second copy was purchased by a priest who otherwise perhaps never would have read it. What great good the book did for him and for many other souls; and it also prompted others to buy the book. May God's will be blessed and praised forever! Blessed is he who lets himself be led by God's will! Without realizing it, how many treasures are accumulated!

Regarding the translation that I am doing at the request of the Bishop, and for which you gave me your blessing, who knows what the Lord will do? What will be the fruit that it produces? You see, Father, how the Lord unites us in our work also. When that translation penetrates souls and inflames them with divine love, we shall be the ones who have enkindled that fire. I have done very little so far and it is a very large work, because I am translating all the footnotes. They are so beautiful. Although it will take me a long time to complete it, with the grace of God I will do so.

One can do what he wills to do, and I will to do blindly whatever the Lord wills of me. This will of mine is not always accompanied by sensible attraction; on the contrary, the Lord occasionally despoils it of that and lets me will almost without knowledge or feeling. But he always gives me an interior conviction, however hidden in the depths of my soul, that these are my dispositions. Jesus does not want me to remain a little girl, and therefore he takes from me the nourishment of a child. I know that he wants many other things of me. I cannot tell you exactly, Father, because my aspirations are numerous. I do not know what spirit I have, but the Lord will make you understand. I would like to be a child like St. Therese; but also I would like to be a doctor and teacher like St. Teresa, to speak as she did and to teach souls to love God as she did. The interior and hidden life of our own St. Gabriel attracts and enchants me; but I also want to be like his holy Father, St. Paul of the Cross, and travel throughout the world with crucifix in hand to show to each soul the price with which God has purchased its love. I don't know

where to stop, or what I want, or what I am. If the Lord is to grant all my desires, as I hope he will, he will give me everything in order to win souls to the love of Jesus. I ask God to make me both little and great, ignorant and wise, hidden and known throughout the world.

I seem to hear you say: "This daughter is foolish and has good judgment; she is old (35 years) and seems to be a child; I don't know how to deal with her." Well, Father, treat me as a woman and a man, as ignorant and wise. Then, together with the Lord, you will be preparing me for all this. A very strange thing! Is it not perhaps because Jesus, on coming to this earth, became all things in order to lead all to God? Moreover, it is only in love that there is no danger of excess, because Jesus has completed all things. He himself told us this with his *Consummatum est.*" [6] And Father, since we cannot love to excess, let us at least love as much as we can. I am consoled by the thought that one day, that day without night, Jesus has promised his own to perfect them in unity with himself; and therefore we shall all reach that eternal furnace of love.

How greatly it consoled me, Father, when you predicted that I would be given new flames of love! Tell this also to Jesus, because he is the one who must grant them to me. I already experience them to some extent, but this does not suffice. I need more fire to melt the ice of my heart which, if it were not as cold as ice and hard as a rock, by this time it would have melted under the power of so much love from my God. Nevertheless, I wish to tell Jesus that I love him. Let us rival each other to see who can perform more acts of love of God, who can repeat more frequently in mind and heart and lips: "Jesus, I love you."

Father, I want you to know that I often invite my guardian angel to count, if he can, all my acts of love. I tell him: "I want to tire you out." And I also get tired. Then I am silent; and what a sweet repose it is to be exhausted from love. The weariness itself is a kind of repose, because for the soul that loves there is no rest outside of love. Yes, let us say frequently: "Jesus, I love you." The Lord grant that these will be our last words.

And when the enemy persists with his evil suggestions, let us also say: "Jesus, I love you." How precious these words are then and how painful is that state! Only the Heart of Jesus can appreciate its value. Take courage, Father, and let us not be fearful. God has our souls in his hands, and so securely that we need not fear that we shall ever exert the great effort that is necessary to escape from him. His grace is sufficient for us, and when we cannot increase it by means of sacramental absolution, let us do so by our love. That is my recourse when I feel the need to receive this sacrament and I cannot.

In this respect, I envy you for the ease with which you can go to confession. Do so, Father, as often as you can. There is always something that needs to be cleansed, and it is also a great means for obtaining strength in the struggle. We poor nuns do not have at our disposal anyone other than "Father Savior." Do you know what I mean? Well, sometimes when some of us would like to go to confession, the Prioress says: "Go to choir and confess with Father Savior." [7] And so we do this; and although he does not raise his hand in absolution, we can at least open our hearts to him.

In these days, Father, almost without realizing it, the words frequently come to my lips: *"Quaerens me sedisti lassus,"* [8] and I feel great sorrow for my sins. I don't know how to explain the effects and sentiments that these words produce in me. They penetrate me like an electric current that comes from God, illumines my soul and makes me understand many things which I have heard or read many times, but have never understood in this way. The Lord makes me understand,that if a soul finds in Sacred Scripture all that it needs, according to the circumstances and dispositions in which it finds it-

[6] "It is finished."
[7] That is, confess to Christ our Savior.
[8] "Faint and weary thou hast sought me."

self, that is a sign that God himself is nourishing the soul with the food of the strong, because all other nourishment from books or the words of men does not suffice for it. Therefore, Father, by the goodness of God, my soul now desires very little nourishment apart from Scripture or something related to it in books and other sources. Our magazine is also very good, but that book which has as its author, not Father Arintero, but God, is much better and does me much more good.

United under the mantle of Mary, I ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
November 12, 1923

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he reign always in your soul and bless you so that you can constantly increase from virtue to virtue and, inflamed with holy desires, grow in holiness until you see him in Sion.

Your letter consoled me very much. On that day I returned from Alba de Tormes where I was preaching a retreat to the Benedictine nuns. I was able to spend long periods of time and even celebrate Mass several times, with great consolation, at the tomb of the Mystical Doctor, St. Teresa. I am sending you a little statue, a piece of cloth that touched her body, and a souvenir lance so that the angel may also pierce your heart. [9]

Take courage, because everything in your letter pleased me very much and also encouraged me. The hand of God seems to be in all this and so there is reason to bless him and give him thanks. I am especially grateful for the relic of Gemma, to whom I am particularly devoted since the year I spent in Rome, when I read her life. I am following your instructions to apply the relic to my ears each day and say the "Glory be to the Father," as well as three Our Fathers for your intentions.

In regard to the word "exdeicas," a Spanish form of bad Latin, I think you can make an Italian form as others have done in French. If necessary, you may add in parenthesis: "regarding things that are not God, something outside of God;" while *indeicas* signifies that which is in God, something divine.

Concerning the desires that inflame you, our Lord will realize them in his own time, however foolish and extravagant they may seem in the eyes of men. As Louis of Granada has said, God never gives us these desires without intending to fulfill them, if we do not present any obstacle. He will arrange everything smoothly and in a way that one could never expect, as when you see yourself as both a woman and a little girl when they give you duties that seem contradictory. God knows how to make use of any instrument as long as it offers no resistance.

The ejaculatory prayers encourage me greatly: "Jesus, I love you; make me a saint," and I hope that they will produce in me even greater good and help to overcome the enemy who, for the present, seems to be under control. Let us restrain him permanently and let God bind us to himself with chains of love. I send you my blessing and trust myself to your prayers.

Father John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
November 25, 1923

Dear Father:

Yesterday I received your package. May God reward you with love for what you are doing for this wretched soul.

I am very grateful for the book, *Cantar de los Cantares*, which is the one that I shall make the most use of for the time being, since I must learn the games of love so that I shall not leave Jesus because I do not know how to

[9] Referring to the mystical piercing of St. Teresa's heart by a lance in the hands of an angel.

play or do not understand or appreciate the games he plays with my soul. This is what Jesus seems to want to do at the present time with his poor bride. I say to him: "Jesus, it is useless. I know you so well." But I say this in jest, because I realize that we can never fully know this divine lover. His love is more ancient than any other because he loves and has loved from all eternity, but in its loving operations it is ever new, and each one has its own proper form, distinct from the others, leaving in the soul a new impression, a new surprise, a new delight. It is always new as if it were just beginning because it will have to constitute our heaven for all eternity. There is only silence, for one must be quiet in order not to be lost in the abyss of the mysteries into which the mind is carried. Father, how many things are experienced but cannot be explained. But it does not matter, because we understand nevertheless. Yes, we understand because the same Spirit impels us, penetrates us, guides us, transforms us and unites us in his love. Father, I do not tire myself by looking for words because only a few words suffice for us.

In a long conversation with our Superior General when he was here, he assured me that this is the way it happens in the things of the Lord. He knows me well from years ago, when I had consulted with him several times concerning matters of my soul. When he asked me about the state of my soul, I told him how the Lord, in spite of my unworthiness, was continuing with his numerous graces and mercies to take ever greater possession of my soul, as my director has assured me. (He knows from the Prioress that you are my director.) Then I told him I would like to describe what God does with me but was incapable of doing so. I spoke to him, Father, not because I needed to, but because he is a holy man and it pleases me to confide in him.

He approved of everything that I told him and encouraged me to go forward with a great desire of becoming a saint. He also said I should not be surprised at my inability to explain what I feel, because it is proper to the things of God to produce this effect. When we are working alone, we can explain ourselves and say what happens, but when God works in our soul, it is impossible to speak, because the operations of God are incomprehensible, ineffable, and inexplicable. Sometimes the saints look for words and expressions that serve only to make us realize the impossibility of speaking about divine things in human language. He consoled me very much and when I feel incapable of speaking, I shall remember this. It is not that I did not know this before, for I did know it and I understood it and you also have told me this. But it is always a great consolation to hear the truths of God from the lips of his ministers, especially when they are filled with his spirit, as is the Father of whom I am speaking.

I am unable to know, much less to say, what my soul feels when I meet a person whose soul is posessed by God in a manner that is not ordinary. I experience such an empathy, affection, union, or whatever it is, that I think I could never forget that soul. And if I do not experience this in a soul, I suffer pain, especially if it is a religious or a minister of God. I think that it is not that the Lord fails to communicate himself, because he wants to fill all souls with himself; but it is the fault of the soul, which, because of small things or little obstacles, deprives itself of so great a good as to live in intimate union with him who is our life, our beginning and our final end, without whom everything is affliction, sadness and unrest. As St. Augustine says, the heart is restless until it rests in God. To rest in God means to live in intimate union with him, like father and son, because only in union is there rest and peace. Those who do not experience these things do not give them much importance, because they are not convinced of this truth. But it is certain that this is so, and it is painful to see them lose so many blessings that could have made them so happy.

I just remembered another thing that I wanted to tell you. Formerly, when I saw that people had any regard for me, I would change a little and act somewhat differently. But I no longer do this, because I understand that it pleases

God when persons in whom he dwells in a special manner are appreciated and esteemed. If anyone shows me signs of special regard, I feel that it is for him who lives in me, and without him I would merit nothing but disdain; so, when this happens, instead of causing me discomfort, it makes me joyful and gives me consolation. Of course, it is not prudent to manifest this externally, because not everyone is in a position to understand these things. I say that this gives me consolation because I think that they thereby please God; and it is also an occasion to see and come into contact with a soul united to God, who transmits through that soul something of his beauty, thus making the soul lovable and worthy of esteem. I think also that if the divine Sun is not there with his rays of light to shine on the soul, immediately his beauty is hidden and one sees only misery and sin. Yes, whatever there is of goodness, beauty and lovableness in creatures is from God; and in loving them, one loves God. When the sun shines, everything is bright and seems beautiful, even a weed in the field.

I am coming to the end of a page, Father. I only want to tell you that the enclosed picture of St. Paul is sent to you by the Prioress to thank you for your greetings and prayers.

I humbly beg your blessing for the Prioress and myself.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Salamanca
December 14, 1923

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he prepare in your heart, with new flames of love, a dwelling place to his liking, well purified and adorned with acts of virtue, where he can rest and find some compensation for the coldness shown him by the world.

I enjoyed very much the letters of spiritual direction by your holy Founder. If you find more of the same, you may send them to me so that we can publish them in the magazine.

I think that it is good to live in the truth and to admit and be grateful for the gifts of God, without appropriating anything to ourselves and to take care that others do not attribute them to us.

With this I have to take leave of you, because I just got out of bed with a severe attack of erisypelas, which prevented me from offering or even assisting at Mass for several days, including the feast of the Immaculate Conception, although I was able to receive Holy Communion. There, in silence and without any interest in anything, the brief ejaculatory prayers served me very well: "Jesus, I love you; and for the love and honor of your most holy Mother, make me a saint." With this, the offering to Merciful Love and the recitation of the Divine Office, I spent seven days.

But now I am recuperating and I must go to Madrid for eight to ten days. I have to go in haste to take care of some pending matters.

Without time for more, I bless you and commend myself to your prayers, wishing all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
December 24, 1923

Dear Father:

Now that we are approaching the end of the year, I ask that you cast a glance at this poor soul whom the Lord has entrusted to you, to see where and how she is progressing, because I do not know. And then, if you feel so inclined, write a few words on how your own soul is progressing. Our spiritual growth is the only thing that should preoccupy us seriously and totally. Everything else should be of only slight concern, as it would be to someone who is simply passing through a given place. As time passes, it takes everything from us except love, which, on the contrary, it perfects and in-

creases until one day it will lead love to eternity, where it can live and be ours forever. But this love, which will one day be eternal in our soul, does not permit us to be slothful now. It demands that we use all possible means to vivify it, consolidate it and increase it. For this reason we communicate on these matters in order to encourage each other and to grow in love. Yes, to love God more or to die. Let us say this with all our hearts. Although I should rather say it with my will, since my heart does not know whether it says it or what it desires, it is sometimes so cold and insensible.

Do not trust anything I tell you because I do not know how to express myself very well; rather, ask the Lord to help you to understand. To judge from what I feel or what I see when I examine my soul, there is no reason to think that it is making progress. On the contrary, there is good reason to fear that since it does not correspond as it should with such grace; it is moving away from grace. But the Lord makes me understand that the time of examination on the state of my soul has passed, and he does not want me to consider what is happening to it. He just wants me to grow in love, without seeing or feeling, but trusting in the word of him whom he has given me as my director. Not doing this, the least evil that could come to me would be to lose the time that love demands. And so, Father, I shall do no more than glance quickly at my present state of soul in order to give you a general idea. The Lord will make up for what I do not say, for I do not even want to consider too carefully what I am saying to you or how I say it, since that also is time wasted and would give me reason to fear.

My soul seems to be like nature in the autumn, when the leaves fall from the plants which in the springtime promised fruit but are now fallen to the ground without any supports or props. By fruit, supports and props I mean my desires to do great things for the Lord, to work in his vineyard, to win souls for him, to amend my defects, to acquire the virtues, in a word, to desire greater knowledge and love of God. All these things which I have called supports and props (because the soul rests in them and gains strength and help to go forward) are what I lack, Father. I can understand the state of other souls and I can give them advice, but I do so without knowing how, without any feeling, without examining myself or considering whether I am working for the Lord. I do it all in such a superficial manner that it seems that I do things without desiring to do them. All this gives me reason to believe that I deserve no reward from the Lord for this, unless he has mercy on me, because I serve him so coldly after the numerous graces he has given me.

In this state of spiritual depression, in which the soul seems to lose all its energy and realizes its impotence for good, without knowing what it desires or what it is doing, what consoles me is that it retains its peace and tranquillity. Discouragement, sadness or lack of trust do not afflict the soul. Since love took possession of my heart, it seems that it has forbidden these three things (which are so opposed to it) to enter the door of my soul. And if love hides or withdraws, the soul experiences the emptiness, both painful and sweet, but love never permits these three enemies to take its place. From the moment that discouragement, sadness and lack of trust enter a soul, love begins to decrease and disappear. But the Lord does not permit this to happen to me and, I repeat, this is what consoles me. It also consoles me to see that although I do not feel any increase in the love of God, neither do I feel any love for created things. Rather, they are more removed from my affections and I need them less.

If I compare the year which is ending with last year, I see with joy that my heart is more insensible to everything that is not God, it all seems base and unworthy of him. It seems incredible, if one has not experienced it, that love can destroy and reject all these things. It destroys, it annihilates — I don't know what it does. You have experience of these things and I believe that you are experiencing it right now. Therefore, you will understand. Tell me, Father, if it is so, and then the very words that you use to describe the state of your soul will enable me to tell you the state of my soul.

In this regard I am going to tell you something that will show to what extent love demands everything. For some days now I have been suffering from rheumatism, and one night it affected my heart. I thought I was dying and I wanted to have somebody with me. But love suppressed this desire and told me that he was with me and that should suffice. Then I thought about a priest to give me absolution. I thought of you, and I desired to see your white habit near me, for simply the sight of it would console me. But love demanded this sacrifice of me as well. Then I abandoned myself to everything and I said: "I sacrifice everything to Love so that if I have truly arrived at my last moment, Love may sacrifice me." I turned my gaze to the crucifix and said: "I shall hold fast to you, I shall press you close to my heart, and I shall die, saying: 'Jesus, I love you'." But Love demanded even more. Then I thought: if my hands were unable to move in order to grasp my crucified Love, and my lips could not pronounce the sweet name of my Redeemer, Father, Spouse and Savior, I would glady accept this sacrifice also, so that my love, despoiled of all sensible consolation in the supreme moment in which the holocaust is consumed, could be more pleasing to my God. At that moment I understood that this is perfect love, similar to that with which Jesus loved us when he died on the cross for us. This is true growth and trust in love, without any support or prop or even holy satisfaction. Since love is above everything, it suffices for itself and does not need anything from anybody. The more solitary the flames, the more pure and ardent they are and the better and more quickly they consume those who desire to be victims in their sweet fire. Having made the sacrifice of everything in this way, a supernatural peace inundated my soul and calmed me in the midst of my suffering, so that I slept peacefully without being concerned about anything. I realized that it was not the moment of my death but a game of Love to test me and to see how much his poor spouse loved him.

Father, we should never believe or think that we have given enough to Love, because when he gives us more light we are astonished to see what still remains to be given and we see that even in that which seemed to be pure love, there is something of ourselves which always is opposed and repugnant to Love. When a light reveals to us the ways of the Lord — where he hides himself, where he dwells, the happiness of one who finds and possesses him — ardent desires are inflamed at once in our heart to make those secrets known to all and to make everyone understand what we understand and, because of this understanding, what we love. There is also some dust in the desires that seem to proceed from love alone and not to have anything in them but the love of God, if we examine them in the light of pure love. This dust is our forgetting that it is God who gives the light, and if he gives it through our mediation, it is only in proportion to the union that we have with him through love. And then, forgetting that such a union does not suffice for him to transmit that light to souls, we let ourselves become impatient, without reflecting that the cause of the impediment is ourselves. Because it proceeds from God, truth is itself a light, but when those who are to receive it are not disposed, it is necessary that to this light be joined some degree of the brilliance and splendor of love, together with a secret power by which it is able to penetrate and wound those for whom the light of truth alone is not sufficient.

And so, Father, it pleases the Lord very much that these sentiments should always be in your heart, joined to the profound knowledge of the great intellect with which God has blessed you. When you must defend some truth, be fearful of not possessing the degree of love which is sufficient to give power and brilliance and without which, words and arguments cannot convince anyone. Then, with these sentiments, we shall humble ourselves and wait patiently, not only for other persons to embrace the truth but also for our own hearts to love more and to grow in love, because it depends on this more than anything else, although it depends also on the greater or lesser hardness of heart of those who should embrace the truth. Therefore we say:

"Nolite obdurare corda vestra." [10] But apart from this, what is most important for us is the sanctification of our souls, and for this it is most useful to consider whether we are lacking in love, and certainly we are always lacking. What knowledge and what a variety of things love reveals! When I have time, I am going to write an article about the light which love gives for understanding the secrets of God and the power it infuses for explaining them to others. But my difficulty is that I do not know how to express these things very well. I write them, and then I do not like them. But in any case, I shall do what the Lord inspires me to do, for although I do not like to write, I must do it. I see the hand of the Lord in all this, for he guides his poor bride and without depriving her of freedom he makes her say and do what is pleasing to him, without any human respect, as has happened recently on two occasions.

The first concerned the Prioress. According to our rule I am supposed to advise her of her defects. She had severely reprimanded one of the nuns who had made a mistake in cutting a piece of cloth and had ruined it, although it was not due to bad will or carelessness. That night the Prioress came to my cell to tell me she was disturbed in conscience because she may have been excessively severe in giving correction and was undecided whether she could receive Communion the following day without going to confession. Realizing that this was a moment disposed by God for me to speak without human respect I answered: "Yes, Mother, you were rather severe, and she did not deserve this. But sometimes the Lord permits this in superiors so that subjects will grow in virtue, and surely he permitted this today. Do not be worried, but receive Communion with good conscience. Tomorrow both of you will communicate better than ever because the best disposition in approaching Jesus is that of humility."

The other instance concerned Sister Pauline. The Prioress had mentioned to me that Sister seemed to be very sad and that even the recreation period seemed to oppress her. The Prioress was afraid that this might end in neurasthenia. "No, Mother," I said to her, "although her naturally melancholy and reflective temperament could cause one to think this way. She is a beautiful soul for whom I feel a special empathy that enables me to perceive that the Lord is purifying her by depriving her of all sensible consolation in order to unite her more closely to himself." The prioress then asked me to try to cheer her up, but when I did not find her in her cell, I left a note and a marked passage from *The Dark Night* by St. John of the Cross. Some days later, during recreation, Sister Pauline approached me and said in a low voice: "You cannot imagine the good that your little note did for me and also the passage you indicated." I answered: "Give thanks to God, for it is he who has done everything." She answered: "I believe so, because of the effects it produced in me, but I don't know how to express what I felt." Since that time I have noticed that she is more cheerful and happy in her trial.

Father, what do you think of these things? Do you not see God's hand in them? I cannot doubt it, and it confounds and humbles me. It would do much good for this Sister of whom I spoke if you would speak to her some time. She is a very simple and pure soul, and these are the principal dispositions the divine Lover looks for. I believe he will not delay in making her experience his touches of love. In fact, he has already begun, although she does not realize it.

I heartily recommend to your prayers a religious soul who is suffering a most painful state of abandonment that borders on despair. It is incredible how the devil uses discouragement to alienate souls from the love of Jesus. Some days ago this person wrote to tell me that there was no one in whom she had greater trust than this poor sinner. How greatly these souls suffer because they do not have the directors they should have. She asked me to commend her to good persons that I know.

The Prioress wants me to ask if you know where we can find a life of St. Gertrude. She also sends you thanks for your greetings for Christmas and the

[10] "Do not harden your hearts."

New Year and affectionately wishes you the same.

On Christmas Eve I do not go to bed before Matins, in order to keep company with the Blessed Virgin and await the arrival of our little King. Consequently, I shall be in choir until 1:30 A.M. There, Father, this poor sinner who owes you so much will wish you a joyous Christmas. And I cannot end without asking you to pardon any lack of respect caused by my confidence in you. Pardon me for everything and as a father, give me your blessing. May the divine Lawmaker bless us both so that we may grow from virtue to virtue.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

12.
THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Deusto
January 1, 1924

Dear Father:

I suppose you have received what I mailed to you at Madrid. I was not planning to write you, but since Sister Pauline is doing so, Magdalen is also taking advantage of the opportunity, since she always has something to say to her spiritual father.

How pleased we were with the January issue of the magazine and especially the biography of our holy Founder. All are very happy and most grateful to Father Arintero. They know nothing of the part played by this ignorant person! My ignorance, which they all can see, prevents me from writing anything and that is why I am so secure and they suspect nothing. But will they begin to ask about the identity of J. Pastor?

A few days ago my own sister, Mother Teresa of the Passionist monastery in Lucca (Italy), wrote to me about a distinguished lady of Rome, a widow with three children. She tells me that she is a very holy person, favored by the Lord with extraordinary gifts, and that she has made private vows and the vow of greater perfection. She has been examined by expert directors, and in her visits to the community, all the nuns have witnessed extraordinary things by which God proves her holiness so that they will believe that she has a mission from God for the spiritual benefit of the monastery. My sister tells me that new fervor has been awakened in the community. The superiors have given permission to the nuns to communicate with her and to write to her with the same freedom as to a spiritual director. My sister tells me that no spiritual director has ever done her as much good as this woman. She also tells me that the lady has expressed a desire to correspond with this poor sinner and that I should write to her.

Father, I do not dare to do so, especially in the state in which I find myself at the present time. I feel more than ever the weight of my infidelity, ingratitude and hardness of heart. The Prioress has told me that I may do so and thinks it would be well if I did. And when I told the Prioress I did not feel worthy to communicate with holy souls or to write to them, she answered: "Father Arintero is also holy, but you write to him." I replied: "I write to him out of necessity, but I am afraid that the day will come when he will know me and will not wish to bother with me any more." Be so kind, Father, as to tell me what I ought to do, since I find myself in a state of spiritual depression. I am not able to resolve anything.

Bless your poor and affectionate daughter.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
January 9, 1924

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he always be with us and make us so much his own that, if it pleases him, he can make us playthings of his love. I desire that divine love should be everything, everything for you and for me, cost what it may, without any other support than what he gives us in order to take greater possesion of us. Such, my daughter, are my desires; but my work, which is not so much that of a donkey, thanks be to God as that of a log that is insensible to everything, but interiorly loves God alone and enjoys great peace in spite of everything.

This is all I can tell you to satisfy your interest in me. As regards yourself, I see clearly that you are losing nothing but gaining much, very much indeed, by that insensibility and inability that make you feel your own nothingness and trust only in Love. I trust that he will continue doing his marvelous work in the measure that your soul continues to destroy everything that is of your-

self. Therefore let him despoil you and fashion you, because everything, everything is the work of Love. But even trusting in him, he wants us to use the necessary remedies to conserve our strength and be able to serve him. Thus, since you are susceptible to rheumatism, you should use the extra clothing the Prioress offers you. Otherwise, what happened before may happen again and you may be incapacitated because of your own carelessness. In everything else follow your interior movement which in that state supplies for all your efforts. Hence, speak to souls that ask you for light and do not refuse anyone anything that you would not wish others to refuse you if you were in their place.

What you say about the dust that can be mixed with the desires that one considers holy desires to make truth known, has done me much good. While I was in Madrid I was able to realize the obstinate opposition of some to the truth (persons from whom I had expected support), which caused great pain to other religious who wear the same habit and better understand the things of God. [1] I shall endeavor, with the help of your letter, to look at myself more closely, to see whether self-love or anything else is involved here, or whether it is simply zeal for truth. Knowing that if I loved God more, my poor explanations would be more efficacious, I shall try to increase my love.

On the other hand, I shall exhaust every means to see whether I can convince the opposition but avoid polemics, at least the cutting remarks of one poor blind person who is writing such things in a devotional magazine! Thus, in the January issue he accuses me of "turning a deaf ear" when I tried to remain silent, and says that my articles have no other purpose but to "cause trouble." However, we think the time has come to defend the truth, since every day it is becoming more distorted. But we shall do so without answering these provocations, but approaching the question from above.

I have just finished correcting three long articles which will be published, not in *La Vida Sobrenatural,* where we do not want any arguments, but in *Ciencia Tomista,* as a theological discussion. With God's help, I hope that we can completely obliterate the concept of "acquired contemplation," which was unknown to the saints and does no good, but leads to Quietism. I think that our arguments are very strong, and however much we try to present them calmly, they will certainly arouse great displeasure to the opposition. Consequently, I want to wait as long as possible — until May — to see if in the meantime we can work out some agreement or at least let the matter rest so that later both we and they can refine our opinions. May God illumine us and defend his truth. Meanwhile, in all simplicity and as your heart dictates, let me know your opinion.

I am happy that the nuns enjoyed the biography of St. Paul of the Cross and that they do not know or even suspect who wrote it. In this way you will be free to write others. The texts you sent me are very good and I am waiting for the opportune moment to publish them, as well as the other articles. So keep sending material. Also, you will do well to write what Love teaches you.

I cannot write any more for now, because I have many letters awaiting me. In closing, I believe that since the Prioress is willing, you should communicate with that good lady in Rome and write to her briefly now. In your present state it will be helpful to you to communicate with souls in this way.

I give you my blessing and I commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately yours in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
February 9, 1924

Dear Father:

Since some time has passed without receiving a letter from you, I feel a great need to write to you because I have a world of things to say to you. But

[1] Father Arintero refers here to certain Discalced Carmelite Fathers who defended the possibility of acquired contemplation.

I had to sacrifice writing for some days because I was occupied with making 500 scapulars of the Passion for our Fathers. This has enabled me to realize that when obedience or circumstances dispose otherwise, I remain at peace, offering God the sacrifice of that which I would like to do.

Perhaps you also were waiting for a letter from me. This would not surprise me because it is natural to desire the means that God gives us in order to grow in his love. Yes, Father, we can love him more. This thought must not allow us any peace or rest. As for me, until I can say that I love my God as much as is humanly possible, I shall feel as if I do not love him at all and I shall suffer as if that were the case. Isn't that the way it should be?

Your last letter gave me much reason to bless the Lord and in no ordinary way but *cimbalis bene sonatibus,* [2] especially because of the gratifying news of your coming visit. But you should suppress the word, "passing" and instead write, "without haste," for it is almost a year since you visited me. See if you can spend a few days here. I need you to take a good look at my soul and I don't know in what state you will find it. Each day I find myself more downcast and listless, finding it increasingly difficult to speak or write; and what is worse, to love God. You will recognize this by the article I am sending you for the month of May. I don't know if you will be able to edit it. It is full of repetitions and I wrote it in brief snatches of time. As to the poetry, if you cannot use it, it doesn't matter. My sweet Mother has seen my desire to make her loved, and that suffices for me.

What you told me about the articles you are preparing was a great consolation. They are right in saying that it is time for you to speak out. But to tell you the truth, I have also been pleased and edified by your silence. I have blessed the Lord and given him thanks for your manner of acting in certain things that I have known. I am happy to have a learned director, but even more so to have one who is holy, and most of all to have one who is both holy and learned. It is easy to find a person who speaks well, but not so easy to find one who knows when to be silent.

When I consider the silence of Jesus before his judges, with all the reasons and motives he had to speak, I perceive in this silence a wisdom much greater and more eloquent than all human arguments. To speak, when it is evident that the one listening is not disposed to accept the truth, is nothing but a manifestation of self-love that wants to show that one does not lack arguments. But by remaining silent, one seeks the glory of God alone and sanctifies his own soul.

But *"omnia tempus hadent."* [3] And now you should speak out fearlessly. As a fisherman for your divine Master, launch the boat into the deep by your articles and fish for souls in order to draw them to the love of Jesus. Let love lead you and do not be afraid. Your daughter will watch you joyfully from the shore, and if she sees that the waves of opposition obstruct your course, she will send to you her poor love as a help, this love which unites us only to struggle with greater force to gain souls for Love. If divine love were to become lukewarm in either of us, I think, Father, that immediately our union would also be weakened and the plans of God would be thwarted.

Now I shall try to prepare my soul to receive the grace the Lord will give me during your visit, so that at the same time that he gives us the consolation of being together, we can give him consolation by approaching more closely to him and growing in his holy love.

Prostrate at your feet, I beg your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
March 1, 1924

Dearest daughter in Jesus, our beloved Master:

May he always reign in us.

I was also a little surprised at your tardiness in writing, since I see that our

[2] "With high sounding cymbols."

[3] "There is a time for everything."

Lord wants us to encourage each other to serve him with all fidelity and to love him with ever greater fervor. So your letters always encourage me and rouse me from my tepidity. But when God prevents us from comminicating, he knows why he does it. And now I have been tardy because I had to go to Leon and then I was hoping to visit you. But our Lord did not let me make a "passing" visit, undoubtedly because soon I shall be able to make a leisurely visit as you desire. I have been asked to give a retreat in Leon during the fourth week of Lent at the convent of the Incarnation. At that time, if God wills, we shall be able to speak about everything and see what needs to be done.

As to the biography of your holy Founder, I am sorry that they did not make more reprints while the type was set up. Then they could easily have printed the additional 250 copies. But now it would have to be done all over again, including the request for the *imprimatur,* and I don't think it is worth the trouble until there is a reason to make a better reprint and a larger number. But I am happy that the Prioress was pleased with the biography and that she sees that it is for the glory of God and the good of your Order that you do this type of work whenever you feel called to it and I judge it opportune. Therefore be encouraged to follow the impulse of your heart when you see by its fruits that it comes from the Holy Spirit, who knows what is best for us and makes children and even mutes speak. Just as he teaches us how to love and adore in spirit and in truth by making the heart arid and insensible, so also he blinds our poor intellect by preventing it from reasoning and operating in a purely human manner, so that he can illumine it with the rays of his divine light.

Take courage and do not be afraid during those periods of obscurity and insensibility, because they are the games of love and the divine discipline will renew and deify you if you are faithful and docile and believe in Love, who does these things. Be at peace and start to make notes of anything you want to say to me or give to me for publication.

For my part, I have finished the three long articles in which I hope to correct the confusing doctrine that does harm to so many souls. The first and most important of the articles is already in the hands of the censors so that they can change or correct whatever they think necessary It should appear in the May issue of *Ciencia Tomista.* Pray to God that all this as well as my work in Leon and my visit in three weeks may be to his greater glory and for the good of souls.

With my blessing, yours affectionately in Christ.

Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
March 6, 1924

Dear Father:

Since I was expecting your promised visit instead of a letter, when I received the letter I said to myself that this is a bad sign. But I was consoled when I read it and saw how the Lord disposes all things for good. Three weeks pass quickly. We shall speak of our souls, of our God, of our Blessed Mother, of all our affairs.

It sometimes happens that when one has much to say and a heart that is full, the mouth becomes mute and one prefers silence in order not to contaminate the things of God with our impure lips. This is also why I prefer not to write and makes me hope that sometime you will say to me: "Stop writing; it makes you lose the things of God." But then your letters dash my hopes. I often think of the many profitable articles you could write by dedicating to them the time you spend in correcting my articles; but I must be silent and obey.

Now that you are about to visit us, I want you to be content, Father, so that you will not scold me or give me a penance, although I do not fear your penances and you do not know how to scold. But if you do not know how to

scold, the Lord does; and how severely he acts with souls that are in his paternal hands but do not obey blindly and do not let him treat them as he pleases, without offering any resistance. If I am writing and then they call me, I must leave a word unfinished and run, or if I am reading, leave the book open and go.

One day when the Prioress spoke to me about a person who wanted to hear from me, I said: "For charity's sake, Mother, I have no desire to write. Tell them that Mother Magdalen does not write because she does not know how to write." But the Lord made me understand at once: "What if I want to do good for that soul through you? Am I the master or am I not?" I responded: "I shall do everything, Lord."

In no other virtue is such perfection asked of me as in the virtue of obedience. If I do not obey blindly, Jesus withdraws, and he is right to abandon me as an unfaithful bride. Yet, he does not actually withdraw; he hides, and at the same time lets himself be perceived. On Ash Wednesday, when I approached to receive ashes, the Lord let me experience great consolation. He filled my heart with peace and joy on hearing the words: *"Memento homo quia pulvis es."* [4] He gave me to understand that only when I am reduced to dust, to that matter from which the body was formed, will my soul return to him whence it came and then will be verified the ideal: "All for God, nothing for man." O happy nothingness which establishes me in God and makes me forever one with him!

Later, when I made my visit to our sweet Mother, I was still absorbed by this consoling thought, and at her feet I understood what a great grace it is to belong to God and to be his. What causes sadness to those unfortunate souls who live far from God is the thought of the destruction of the body that they love so much, but this consoles and gladdens those who belong to God. How different are the thoughts, aspirations and judgments of one from the other.

Next Tuesday we begin retreat. I beg you, Father, to commend me to the Lord so that I shall not fail to hear any of the precious words by which he speaks to the heart of those who live in solitude. And then, Father, let us both go to the desert where our Love is fasting, doing penance for us. Let us gather together with great care all the sacrifices offered to us each day and make of them an offering to Jesus, saying: "Eat a little, Beloved. You, who nourish yourself on love, take this food which I have prepared for you — poor, as my love is poor." Let us see which of us can treat Jesus better in his rigorous fast in the desert.

Thank you for the holy card from "Grandfather." The picture is beautiful.

Father, bless your poor daughter.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
March 8, 1924

Dear Father:

I shall tell you briefly the state of my soul, what I am experiencing and what I understand, or seem to understand, so that you can answer when you come, since the Lord in his goodness grants me this grace.

You already know, Father, that some months ago I began to feel the presence of God less than before. At first I thought of various things, fearing that they were the reason why the Lord had withdrawn from me. I have already told you one of them so you could decide. Your words reassured me and the Lord also made me realize that I would be wasting time to investigate the reason, because nothing could help me, but I should concentrate on loving him and believing in his love. I then promised Jesus I would never doubt his love, no matter how he treated me. And I believe that love has continued to guide me, though less sensibly, and to make me understand many other things, as you will see from the articles I am sending you.

Right now, I can't describe my state. You will see and be able to tell me.

[4] "Remember, man, that thou art dust."

While I am able to recognize the signs of divine love in other souls, in my own soul I neither see nor understand anything. But what you can tell me will be my support, and that will suffice for me.

I said before that I experience the presence of God less, but it would be better to say that I now experience it in another way. Formerly I experienced and enjoyed the tenderness of the divine arms carrying me; but now, without ceasing to believe that he still carries me, I experience the holiness of God and my own nothingness. That is how the Lord makes me feel now; his presence keeps me in a state of almost constant confusion, humiliation and depression. I think I have always been weak and wretched, but I have never seen or felt the way I am now. I seem to have no taste for anything; I am not able to do anything, much less to write. But if you command me, Father, God will give me the grace, or rather, he will do everything without me or in me — of that I am sure.

My whole prayer is to ask mercy, grace and pardon. Many times I meditate on the *Miserere*, when the Lord lets me do so, but at other times I do nothing but remain quiet in my nothingness, and silence is my supplication. Although I do not understand this state of my soul, there is not nor has there ever been any confusion or disturbance of any kind, but much peace, order and quiet. If at times I fear I may not have done what I ought or have displeased the Lord somehow by working against the Spirit, I realize at once that such is not the case. They were only material actions, faults and imperfections that did not penetrate to the depth of my soul; the mercy of God consumes them and I do not lose my peace and quiet. [5]

I prefer to die rather than live, but knowing that after my death I shall not be able to grow in the love of God, I am content to live, although sometimes my soul suffers greatly for not being able to see and be with the unique object of its love. There are moments when it seems that a torrent of water is confined in my heart and it wants to gush forth with great force. Then I don't know what to do; I feel foolish and can only say: "O Jesus, give me love." I go to Mary and say to her: "My Mother, teach me how to love Jesus. Give me the love of your heart in order to love him as much as you loved him and still love him. My Mother, give me love, for I suffer greatly. If you do not give me love, I shall die."

The Prioress tells me that I eat very little and should eat more; but even if I do so, I do not put on weight, because I feel that I am consumed from within by my hunger for the love of God. To be well, I need love, much love; nothing else is of any avail. In my coldness and dryness of heart, the only relief would be to make it love God, but when I try, I don't know how to say anything.

Sometimes in recreation the nuns ask me about spiritual things and I tell them that I know nothing and do not understand anything. I only know that in loving God one is blessed and lacks nothing and understands everything, although it may not know how to express it. As for me, even if I could and would know how to say it, I prefer to be silent in order not to have to regret what I have said when I say more than I should. Then the nuns laugh and say that I am a mystic. It is better to speak with outsiders than with those in the house, and more good is done.

A short time ago a person (a priest) who was suffering very much expressed the desire that we should be united in spirit, as St. Therese of Lisieux was with her missionary brothers. I didn't have the courage to say yes, because I do not feel the energy for anything. I said only that I would pray to God and would do all I could. Afterwards I was sorry I had acted that way. I realized that I had looked only at the wretched state of my soul and not at the infinite goodness of the Lord who, looking not at my wretchedness but at the humility and faith of his minister who was seeking help from this poor sinner, would have

[5] Mother Magdalen consistently makes a distinction between imperfections and venial sins because she considers the former to be involuntary and hence not sinful, though they impede growth in perfection.

granted him the graces that he needed. To have a spiritual brotherhood or union of spirit with a minister of God seemed at first glance a grace so great that I did not dare to seek it in my deplorable state. But now I think that perhaps that was the means the Lord was offering me for obtaining his mercy, because the gain was certainly all mine. I intend to write to that priest. What do you think, Father?

Should I consider these things as infidelities to grace? When I go to confession, I feel burdened with sin, but ordinarily I accuse myself in general, without any particulars, because I don't know how to accuse myself of such things. They are interior sins of a spirit which does not cling to God as it ought and does not follow and seek him with the ardor that he deserves. I can summarize everything in these words: I am evil. Sometimes I accuse myself of a particular sin and then I am upset because it seems that it was not a sin or was not the way I explained it.

I have said nothing to the confessor about my vow of greater perfection. Should I tell him about it, Father? For the vow could change the species of sin or increase the gravity. I fear to offend and displease God, but this is not what makes me suffer most. It is the fear of not loving him. If I knew that I truly loved him, nothing else would matter to me.

I have read somewhere that after death it is impossible to grow in the love of God. This causes me suffering, and I asked the Lord to grant that my love will increase at every moment through all eternity — that he will grant me this grace in view of the fact that I am asking for it now, when I have the exercise of free will. Father, what do you think of my foolishness?

The Lord makes me understand that what he looks at and esteems are the sincere desires of the heart, what occurs in the interior of our soul. Because we are more material than spiritual, we frequently concentrate more on the material than on the spiritual; it is not so with God. He knows very well that what happens or is experienced in the lower part of us, often in spite of ourselves, can never do us any harm if we do not wish it. It is something that happens outside of us, as if it were not our own but something done by the enemy. If we do not come out of our interior, those things can never harm us. And the Lord does not consider this aspect, save to give us more merit and to increase his grace in us. I say this, Father, so that it may help both of us, for it is important to understand this in order to preserve that peace of heart which is necessary and indispensable if God is to communicate himself to the soul. And I say it also so that when you realize that the Lord makes your poor daughter understand things as they are in reality and as they should be considered, you will always speak with complete freedom and without any fear that anything will surprise or astonish me. [6]

We must help each other, Father. If I did not understand that this is what the Lord wants, I would not dare to speak to you in this way. Just as the Lord gives you what you need in order to be able to benefit my soul, so also he gives me what is necessary in order to do good to all the souls that he commends to me. I feel that he gives me the heart of a mother in regard to souls. How many of them I want to win to the love of Jesus and place on the road of truth. But then, what about my own soul? I trust that it is in his hands, that you think of it, and that suffices for me.

Tell me, Father, whatever you think the Lord wants of me, for I feel completely disposed and I desire nothing more than to obey him.

Please bless your poor daughter.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
March 18, 1924

Dear Father:

This morning we finished our retreat, and for me it was especially ben-

[6] Any temptations by means of the senses or any faculty outside the will can never do any moral harm until they are accepted by the will. Hence, sin is not in any feeling, emotion or sensation as such, but it is an act of the will.

eficial. It belongs to you to judge and to me to give you an account of the state of my soul during these days of abundant graces of the Lord — my desires, my efforts, my struggles and resolutions. Seeing that my soul was in a state of incapacity for doing anything good, and knowing at the same time the great need it had of the grace of the Lord, I realized from the first day of the retreat that I had to find some more powerful means that would oblige the Lord to lean over the abyss of my miseries and give me his hand. This means I found in the Holy Passion of Jesus. I felt myself led to this sea of mercy to find pardon and grace there. You already know, Father, and we both know that when God gives an attraction for something in particular or inclines the soul to some definite thing, the soul needs do nothing but follow this movement. Here lies all its good; here it finds whatever it needs, and without any effort. And if, on the other hand, something else seems better to the soul, and it strives to find the remedy for its needs in some other way, it often wearies itself in vain or with very little profit. Guided by this principle, which experience has often proved to me, I willingly surrendered to this precious attraction that the Lord was giving me and I tried to fish in the immense sea of the Passion for the riches that are hidden there. Although this is proper to my religious profession and I ought always to be occupied with it, I was never so strongly impelled as then to fulfill this sacred duty which my religious profession imposed on me: to draw water from the fountain of the Savior — his sacred wounds — and thereby supply my needs and those of all souls. And how many things are understood by the soul that lives habitually in this sea, saying: *"Haec requies mea, hic habitabo in saeculum saeculi."* [7] Here is where saints are formed according to the heart of God, as was the holy David. Here is where the soul makes the noblest resolutions and carries them out. Here it finds peace, fortitude, light, knowledge and life. Here is where my soul has enjoyed ineffable delights and has experienced that it is loved by God.

Yes, Father, it can also be a consolation to you and all souls who resolve to plunge into this sea and drink its waters, which gush forth from the fountain of eternal love. And by the very fact that it is eternal, the more one drinks from it, the holier he is, because he drinks more of God himself. And that we may be more convinced that this is so, I shall tell you that the day that I was sick, the Lord made me experience his presence at various times and very strongly. These are moments that pass unnoticed by others because, although one is in the company of others, nobody but the soul that receives the favors is aware of them. They are precious moments when the Lord is present only for an instant, but how many things the soul understands and how many mysteries are revealed.

To return to my nothingness, I have no words, Father, to tell you what I feel and understand when the Lord makes me see my nothingness. I shall only tell you that it arouses in me a great desire to go to confession and I would do nothing more than that, although in going I hardly know what to say because I cannot express what I feel. Two days after making a regular confession, on the second day of retreat, I again asked permission to go, but it was not given to me because there were other nuns who had not yet gone to confession. I resigned myself without losing my peace of soul. I did not insist that the Prioress should let me go, preferring to sacrifice my desire and offer it to God as a kiss of his wounds.

On the last day of retreat I committed the fault of saying something that indirectly cast blame on the Prioress for some little disorder. I am inclined to think that it was only an exterior fault because I was not disturbed internally nor did I lose my peace of soul. Nevertheless, the devil placed this fault before me and used his artifices to make me despair or at least to commit acts of distrust. All day long he bothered me with thoughts such as these: "It is a long time since you have committed such a serious sin and you have done it during retreat. This is a clear sign that you received no benefit from your retreat.

[7] "Here is my rest; here I shall dwell forever."

You will have to give an account of these days of grace. The other nuns have profited from them; you are the only one who contemned them. You should know by this that God is not with you, for if God were in your soul, you would not commit sin. God and sin cannot be joined together." What was worst of all, they would not let me go to confession because they said that others needed to go more than I did.

I do not like to reveal to others what happens in my soul, so they did not see me sad or tearful, as sometimes happens but, by the grace of the Lord, with my usual serenity and peace. To lose that would be a greater evil than my faults. I accepted everything with a humble and contrite spirit, without losing my tranquillity. But then the devil tried to make me believe that my tranquillity proceeded from hardness of heart and a lack of the love of God. In that way he tried to discourage me, but I fought him with all the energy of my soul.

When I returned that evening to ask permission to go to confession on the following day, I was told that there were three nuns ahead of me and that I could go only if there were time left. Thinking that I would not be able to do so, I offered this sacrifice to the Lord and said to myself: "Although I cannot go to confession, I shall receive Communion with peace of soul and afterwards receive the Papal Blessing in order to rout the enemy and give proof to Jesus of my confidence in his love and infinite mercy."

When I went to my cell later, the devil again tried to upset me. I took my crucifix and held it tightly; I kissed it many times, with acts of trust and abandonment to the arms of his infinite love. I slept as peacefully as if I were the most innocent and happiest soul in the world. But on the following morning, before Mass, Jesus gave me the consolation of receiving confessional absolution, thus increasing my gratitude to God for the goodness with which he tests and manages and consoles his poor bride. And then, when I received Communion, I don't know how to describe what I experienced. I was like a drop of water lost in the boundless ocean of the infinite mercy of my God.

I had written another page but the Prioress does not permit me to send more than two because she is afraid that the letter will weigh too much. I shall leave the rest for another occasion if the Lord permits.

Asking your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
March 24, 1924

Dear Father:

For some time I have been wanting to speak to you about the presence of God in my soul, about how I experience this presence and the signs that reveal it to me, but I have always avoided it because these things are so difficult to express. In this letter I shall try to say something, although at the end I shall still be far from having explained what my soul experiences and knows in this state.

Peace and serenity are the first signs that reveal and make me experience his presence. Then a sweet quiet pervades my being. I would compare it to that which one experiences when he has searched for something he desires very much, and then finds it and rests in the enjoyment of it. Or it is like the sweet and satisfying rest enjoyed by the body after a day of strenuous work performed with fidelity and love and for which we are certain we shall receive a generous recompense. I often feel this way at night when I return to my cell — tired, yes, but with a conscience that does not reproach me for anything. How sweet it is then to close one's eyes in sleep and rest in the name of the Lord.

But it seems that the soul never rests, because its faculties are always active, in search of a good for which it longs and yearns to possess. Sometimes the soul seeks it unconsciously, but it always tends to that good, and no one can prevent the soul from experiencing this aspiration for God as its center and the only place of its rest.

By "rest of the soul" I mean that it no longer seeks the object that it loves and it suspends the use of its faculties, since it does not now experience that longing which impels it to search for the good it loves and for which it yearns. But only God can give this rest; apart from him, no rest is possible for the soul. St. Augustine says it well: *"Inquietum est cor meum donec requiescat in te."* [8] Therefore, to experience this rest is a certain sign that God is present in the soul and the soul recognizes him, delights in him, and understands him, by a knowledge that God himself gives to it, so that things can be known in truth, as they are in his presence — the good as good, and evil as evil. One can then understand how man mixes lies and vanity, loves them, feeds on them, and wants to stop there, pretending to find what he needs where it can never be — light and truth and, as a consequence, peace and the pure joy of love. Where there is no truth and things are not given their true value and worth, the soul can never find true peace, because the soul has deviated from its true goal and is off the path that leads to it. In a word, the soul is in error, and since it should share in divine truth, in God who is light and truth by essence, when separated from him it cannot rejoice, but suffers greatly.

I could not tell you, Father, what I experience in regard to the things of earth. They are frequently a source of great preoccupation, concern and work, not only for worldly people but also for religious. But I see that everything is smoke, nothingness and what a great loss it is to exchange the true good for an empty shell. *Veritas!* [9] This word is the motto of your Order, and how much I love it. When God reveals to the soul how imperfect and unworthy of being loved is everything that is not the truth, it cannot help but feel an attraction, a great appreciation for this beautiful word. Father, I love this beautiful and glorious heritage which your holy Founder has left to you. Defend it, appreciate it, and strive that all will know and love it. You will never be able to do as much as it deserves, because the truth contains infinite mysteries and marvels which will be revealed to us throughout all eternity. Suffice it to say that it was for this that Jesus came to the world: "I have come to give witness to the truth." Before he came, the truth was unknown or mixed with error. But he appeared among us, full of grace and truth, so that we could see and know its beauty in him and could separate ourselves from the deceit and lies which dominated the whole world and infected and brutalized everything. But in spite of everything that Jesus has done, how little known the truth still is. And how many souls, including good ones, confuse truth with error. They seek God, but in what way? They want to become saints, but outside of the truth there is not and cannot be any sanctity. They confuse the means with the end, and are even mistaken in their use of the means, because they seek and use them in a human way, just as they do when they talk about and pursue material and temporal things. They do not stop to realize that the things of the spirit are very different and that one must seek them in a much higher way, quite different from the one perceived by our senses, which can so easily deceive and confound us.

The intimate and assiduous study of Jesus in his holy Gospel is the means — and I think I should say the *only* means — that will reveal to souls the errors in which they are involved, and this in turn, is the reason why they cannot grow and make progress in perfection and the love of God. Also, without any study or meditation on our part, God can reveal the truth to us directly and make us know it and in knowing it, love it. This happens when, moved by purity of motive, we perform all our works with a delicate conscience.

But Father, I do not see anything in my soul except imperfections and defects. In spite of this — and I am embarrassed to say it — the Lord sometimes reveals to me, in a manner I dare not express, his secrets and the beauty of his truth. I think that the Lord treats me this way because he is pleased with the

[8] "My soul is restless until it rests in thee."

[9] "Truth."

confidence I have in him in spite of my miseries, and also my sincere desire to love him. But more than anything, he does it out of pure goodness. And this is what confounds me and makes me feel prostrate under a weight that sweetly crushes me. The immense weight of the infinite goodness of God consumes in me whatever it finds opposed to his love. It seems that here are verified and fulfilled the words of the psalm: *"Intellectum tibi dabo, et instruam te in via hoc, qua gradieris, firmabo super te oculos meos."* [10] How certain it is that the Lord gives understanding better than anyone and instructs the soul how to travel by this path of truth. It then merits that the Lord should say to it: "I have my eyes fixed on you."

But Father, how have I come to speak of all this? I have strayed from what I wanted to tell you. I say things in such a confusing manner that I must ask your patience in reading them and your great intelligence in understanding them in order to abstract anything from the mountain of words that you find in my letters. Before beginning to write, I feel a certain sloth, because I don't know what to say and I don't know how to say it. But once I have started, everything that I say seems to be too little, and I feel a growing need to open my heart to the Father that the Lord has given me, and who thinks and feels as I do. I cannot do this with anyone except you. It is a sweet relief for my soul to reveal to you its most intimate movements and sentiments, in the certain confidence that the Lord will make you understand, for he knows that I want to say things as they are, although I cannot or don't know how to do it.

To return to what I was saying at the start about the realization of God's presence in me through the peace and sweet rest of my soul, when I experience this, I understand, though I don't know how, that God is with me and I am with him. The rest or suspension of the faculties of the soul is what makes me experience God the most. The other things I experience more or less habitually, but when the soul searches, longs for and desires God, it does not enjoy his presence as much as when it is at rest, nor is it as certain of possessing him. I understand that a perfect soul enjoys God more and approaches more closely to him when it is more detached from all things, because then it is stripped of every sentiment and more closely identified with him who is purely spiritual, so much so that one cannot say or imagine what he really is. The best idea that one can have of him is not to have any idea of him. Nothingness rather than things is what best enables me to understand God.

In the catechism we used when I was a child, I remember that one of the questions was this: "What was there before the creation of the world." And the catechism answered: "There was nothing but God, always happy and always blessed in himself." This is the way I prefer to think of God — God as he is in himself. Everything else wearies me and my spirit seems to reject it. Therefore, when the soul is at rest, when it does nothing and it experiences nothing but remains in nothingness, that is when it is most apt to be united with God and to experience in an incomprehensible way that other "nothingness" which contains everything in himself. This manner of God's self-communication to his creatures is what I like most and seems to be most proper to God. But for us, who cannot abstract completely from ideas or concepts, there always remains some doubt about what the Lord is. When I find myself in this state, I understand that it cannot be anything but God who draws me to himself this way. But since this all happens in a manner so simple, intimate and spiritual it makes me fear that it could be my imagination. But then, when I experience the effects it produces in my soul, I know that they are good, very good, and only God can produce them. I cannot imagine how God could communicate himself so intimately to the soul in a better way. So I am at peace and content, although I would like you to say something about this and reassure me.

When I experience my nothingness in God, that is when I best understand through him whatever I say or write concerning the good. And everything

[10] "I will give the understanding and instruction in the way thou shalt go; I will fix my eyes upon Thee."

else that I cannot express is impressed on my mind and serves as a guide to regulate my actions. Frequently, Father, I am accustomed to tell you in my letters that the Lord said to me, that it pleases or displeases the Lord, etc. You will understand that it is not that the Lord has dictated these words to me, but that the ideas or thoughts that they express do come from the Lord, because he is good and in me there is nothing but ignorance. It is true that one can learn by reading and that some books have given me much light concerning the interior matters of the soul, but the pure truth, when I write it, has to come from my heart, for if I had to depend on what I read, I could not put four words together. The thoughts that the Lord gives are like something seen with the eye of the soul, and once seen, they are understood. Sometimes the thoughts are clearer and they are understood through words, but not human words, because they proceed from the interior of the soul.

For example, one day I was doing something that the Prioress had commanded. I felt happy in thinking that in doing this I was pleasing the Lord, and I heard within me: "Whoever does the will of God will live forever." Afterwards I found these words in the epistles of St. Paul and it consoled me greatly, because I did not know that they were from him. At the same time, it confirmed that the words were from the Lord. At other times my soul perceived the following statement, not in words but as something in the intellect: "Do not fear, you are in the truth."

And now, Father, be so kind as to tell me if I should express myself in another way or continue in this way when giving an account of my soul. Whatever you tell me, I shall be at peace. To be understood and to follow a safe path, that is the desire of your poor daughter, who asks your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
March 31, 1924

Dear Father:

What happened? You told me that you were coming and then . . . . Meanwhile, I have been telling myself: "Blessed be God. His will be done." In this way nothing is lost but everything serves for our good and to feed the fire which Jesus, our Love, has enkindled in our hearts. Jesus continually asks of us sacrifices, immolations, holocausts, which we must always offer to him willingly. Let us now offer him the acceptance of our inability to communicate in person, to speak of our souls and the prodigies of love which his infinite goodness is effecting in them, in order to make us ever more his and to detach us from all created things.

Father, what is the Lord doing in my soul? There are times when it seems that he wishes to carry my heart away, and when I feel this way, my thoughts immediately fly to you and I say to the Lord: "Carry us both away, both Father and your daughter, so that they may always be united in loving you and making you loved."

But why do I speak this way? Perhaps you will think that I am swimming in the ocean of love. I do not say that I am or that I am not; I don't know where my poor soul is or where the Lord is. Sometimes he seems to be far away, and at other times he is so close to my soul that I could desire nothing more. These are mysteries which only love can explain, but in the secret of the soul, in that silence so precious to one who loves, which surpasses the eloquence of all human wisdom. If I ask my heart whether it is suffering because it loves or because it does not love, it seems to answer that it suffers for both reasons. The same answer is given if I ask whether my heart suffers or rejoices. So I believe that in the matter of love there is no other remedy but to be silent. That is the only relief and the only means of giving a little rest to this poor heart which finds itself in such a state. This is what Jesus did who *"obmutuit et non aperuit os suum"* [11] when his love for us reached the point of letting himself be led to Calvary and to death like a meek lamb. If Jesus is silent and has no words under the impulses of love, what can we say?

[11] "He was silent and did not open his mouth."

In some of the articles that I have written I have tried to say something about this, but I am not sending them to you, Father. I prefer to give them to you when you come so that I can hear from your lips what you think about these reflections. But if you do not plan to come for a long time, I shall send them to you. Now I am sending you a copy of the Italian translation of "Association of Love." As I have told you, our Father Procurator has charged me to do this. He says that it has aroused a great deal of enthusiasm and they are thinking of establishing it officially with the approval of the Holy See. They have also printed two holy cards, one of the Immaculate Conception and the other of our Sorrowful Mother, with the corresponding prayers. This was a desire that I had hidden in my heart and only the Blessed Virgin knew it. She made it come true to console her poor daughter. How good the Lord is!

In the afflicted heart of Jesus, suffering for so many infidelities to his love, your affectionate daughter humbly asks your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
April 5, 1924

Dear Father:

I see clearly that the Lord wants me to give you an account of the effects produced in my soul by our visit yesterday. And the first thing I ask of God is that he make them known, because I find myself completely incapable of explaining them. It is the first time I ever experienced anything like this in speaking to you. Nothing like it has ever happened before. I must admire it in astonishment in the secrecy of my soul, since no words are sufficient to describe these things.

You will have noted my inability to speak to you, in spite of having in my hand the little paper where I had jotted down the things I wanted to tell you. I sensed the holiness of God in your soul. God himself was manifesting himself to me in your soul. I was overcome with reverential fear, similar to that which the Lord makes me feel when he causes me to experience his divine presence directly. I felt confused, embarrassed, humbled. How much I admire seeing that the Lord and his minister cause the same effects in my soul. At other times when I spoke with you, I felt more strongly the sweetness of the divine presence which I had formerly felt in my soul, and the joy and consolation of my soul were increased. But in this visit my confusion was increased and with it, my self-abasement, the awareness of my own nothingness. It is impossible to tell you, Father, how I felt when I finished speaking with you and how I still feel as I write to you.

I feel the presence of God, his infinite holiness and my nothingness, as I have never felt it before. I seem to perceive that the paternal gaze of God, at other times so sweet, but now terrible because of its holiness, reveals to me my nothingness and humbles me and wishes to reduce me to the dust of which I am formed. He has not left me for an instant and it would be impossible for me not to feel it. How I received Communion this morning! Truly, the *All* was united to *nothingness!* How greatly I desire, Father, that this nothingness should always be lost in the abyss which is my God, who seems to be saying to me: "I wish to absorb you so that now you will no longer live except in me and will become one thing with me." What desires I have to be forgotten, unknown, completely humbled.

I was not able to conceal my condition from the Prioress and I had intended to say something to her about it. It is not that this condition is something new for me; for some time now I have been experiencing God in this way, but never before as this time. It seems impossible that a creature so vile and wretched as myself should see herself in God and in the splendor of his light and to think that the day before, as I told you, this same God treated me like a tender mother that sings her child to sleep, telling me sweetly that the river that was enclosed in my heart and was causing me such torment that I could not sleep, would one day be free to gush forth and would carry in its

wake many souls won to his love.

I know that he who consoled me with this sweet promise, the mere recollection of which almost breaks my heart and fills my eyes with tears as I write, is the same one who in these moments makes me experience him as so holy and yet so terrible. Mysteries? No, they are not mysteries, because I understand them. There are moments, Father, when my poor mind penetrates — I don't know — to the infinite and to God, seeing everything just as it is and myself also. God wants to make me understand that for him to be able to make a passage for that river, I must unite myself to him who *"exinanivit semetipsum"* [12] and died amid the opprobrium of the cross. Then, seeing his greatness and sanctity, I will see my own nothingness and ingratitude.

This is the way the Lord now humbles and confuses me, showing me his mercy and the greatness of his love for me. When I told you, Father, that he gave me light about things in my past life, it is not, as you seemed to understand, about past sins and infidelities. No, Father, it was not about those things. The Lord does not remind me of them and it seems he does not even want me to remind him of them, because he wants me to be certain that I have been pardoned. What he illumines me about is his infinite goodness and what he has done for my soul to draw it to himself. He makes me realize now the value of graces that I formerly received without responding to them or recognizing their true worth. Now he makes me see that *"non fecit taliter omni nationi,"* [13] that he did not work in vain, and that he has always continued to work on the earth of my soul. And he does this so that it will bring forth the fruit of winning souls to his love. And for this it is first necessary that I resemble him.

Help me, Father, to correspond with the plans of the Lord.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
April 6, 1924

Dear Father:

In what a state my soul still is! How I would like to see you, although I know that this would perhaps increase my suffering, as I told you in my previous letter, because it would make me feel more intensely the presence of this God who reveals himself to me as so holy and so terrible. Nevertheless, I wish you could come, even if it were only to receive your blessing and say to you: "Father, help me," as you predicted two years ago.

It seems that my spirit is in a wine-press, being squeezed by a superhuman power. Moreover, it seems to be in contact with a terrible fire that wants to consume it, and not only my spirit but my body as well. I feel it in my bones, in my blood, in my whole being. I seem to be oppressed by an immense weight that wants to crush me. I have no desire to eat or to sleep or to speak. I do everything by sheer force and out of necessity. I believe that if this condition were to increase a half degree more, my spirit could not endure it and would fail in the love and faith promised to my God.

And to think that all this happens, as far as I can understand, by the goodness and infinite mercy of my God, who seems to be saying to me: "What I make you feel is nothing more than my holiness and my love." O Father, what must his justice be? How holy and terrible is the Lord! Who can resist his wrath? I could never have imagined or believed what I now feel. When I first read in St. John of the Cross how profitable are these purifications of which he speaks, I wanted to ask you if I should ask the Lord for them also. But now I know that I do not have enough strength, and I do not ask for them. What will his justice be like if his goodness is so terrible? His absence is more bearable than the experience of his presence. In spite of this, I want his presence; not only that of God, but yours also, Father.

[12] "Emptied himself."

[13] "He hath not done in like manner to every nation."

I feel happy in my nothingness, under the All that my God is, in whom I would like to be crushed and annihilated.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Deusto
April 24, 1924

Dear Father:

It is scarcely half a month, though it seems like half a century, that the Lord granted that we could see and speak to each other. If I could tell you everything that has happened to my soul since then, I would fill many pages. I continue to feel the presence of God as holy and terrible, but doubtless in consideration of my moral and physical weakness the Lord has somewhat lessened its intensity and now it is felt only at intervals and not as strongly as before. During this octave of Easter, after chanting the beautiful Alleluia, he lets me experience his goodness and love, but ordinarily it is the holiness of God that I experience, and it makes me realize the immense distance and inequality between God and myself. This places me in such a state of confusion and embarrassment that I cannot explain it to you. How blind we are until God makes us see things. Before him, our very being disappears. It is as if we did not exist and all that we do is nothing when seen in God. Or rather, sin remains for our confusion and shame, because if only nothingness remained it would not cause such pain.

A few days after you were here I was ill. How wonderful, I thought, if Jesus would take me. I repeated time and again: "My Jesus, take me to yourself forever." But I recovered quickly and at the present time am in good health.

When the divine presence makes itself felt in my soul, it takes away my desire for food. A very little suffices for me. If I were to force myself to eat more, I think it would do me no harm, but it seems that the Lord wants me to eat less than I used to, and he gives me the strength to do it without any effort and even gladly, as is true with all that he asks. It seems as if he decides what I must eat. The Prioress tells me occasionally that I eat very little and that I will make myself weak. Then, for the time being, I take more food but soon continue my former practice, trying to pretend by eating slowly and taking a little of each thing. Father, may I continue to do this? I promise you that if I feel weaker than usual or know that it is doing me harm, I shall try to eat more, although I have no desire for it.

If you only knew, Father, what a burden material things sometimes are to me. It seems that there are two Magdalens in me. One is nothing but appearance, a figure or a shadow, and that one finds herself here on earth doing what everyone else does. The other one, the true and real Magdalen, is with God; she lives in another world, in the world of grace, the spirit of love. Is it true, Father, that in the midst of your occupations you feel the same way? If so, let us do away with the desire to eat and experience the hunger for God and to make him loved.

Hunger to make God loved! How ardently I feel this, and increasingly so. How many souls I would like to win for God; how many I would like to inflame with his love. When I speak, when I write, and in all that I do, I constantly hear a voice which says to me interiorly: "Find a way of making your God loved so that souls will burn with my divine fire." I understand then that it is not I, but Jesus in me who wishes to communicate himself to souls. Then I suffer because I experience his desires but cannot satisfy them because souls will not open themselves to receive the effusion of his love. Father, open your soul completely, without any fear of appearing wretched, and you will see how Jesus will make you happy and will make you understand many more things than you know now. Jesus wants this, so give yourself frequently, without fear and without reserve, to the divine fire of love so that it can inflame you more and more and consume you until you are ashes.

But what am I saying? You are already in this divine furnace; I am the one who needs to cast myself into it, there to be consumed. For that reason I find neither peace nor rest. If I were in that furnace and had been turned into a

flame like my God, everything that approached me would likewise be inflamed without any effort and without so much suffering. But as yet that fire has not penetrated me completely and what it does not penetrate remains impure, unworthy of God, and is a torment for the soul. Would that all souls could experience at least this torment. In the end they would give themselves entirely to love.

Father, the beautiful month of our Mother is approaching. What shall we give to such a sweet and maternal Lady as a gift? For my part, I shall give her acts of fidelity which, as Jesus makes me understand, consist in being diligent in little things. The great things are called virtues, acts of holiness, fidelity to one's duties; but the little things, such as a word, a smile, a sigh, a movement, a glance, are acts of fidelity to love which please Jesus very much. And what pleases Jesus, also pleases his holy Mother. Let us try, Father, to see which of us can offer more of these mystical flowers to our most sweet Mother. It is Jesus who teaches me to call these little flowers fidelities to love.

Humbly begging your blessing and praying that the heavenly Mother will give you hers,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
April 28, 1924

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he always be with us and each day make us rise to a new life. Today is the feast of your holy Founder, and I shall see if I can answer your recent letter, which encouraged and consoled me very much, seeing how Jesus plays with your soul. I saw this especially in your articles on charity, which I have just finished editing for publication. I trust that our Lord will use them to inspire many souls and also to animate our own so that we do not place any obstacles to the work of the Lord. To this end, let us give ourselves in all confidence to his divine hands and let him do and play with us as he wishes, so that he will derive the greatest good from everything. This trust is the only thing that encourages me in the midst of my coldness.

For your part, follow the impulses of your heart and the suggestions of the divine Spirit, who can be recognized by his fruits. Hence, both in the question of food and other things, take care to do that which you clearly see he is asking interiorly. Then you will not go to the extreme of weakening yourself by eating too little nor of doing harm to yourself when he wishes to nourish you with something more substantial. You do well to take a little of everything, attempting to coordinate what the Prioress asks with that which our Lord asks. Try to do the same in regard to everything else, so that our Lord will be content and can use you whenever he wishes in accordance with his divine will.

As for me, I am trying to open my soul to God and to offer the Blessed Virgin that gift of fidelity in small things. But I forget everything, and I spend my life, I don't know how, in desires only.

When I returned here, I found much work which I am now taking care of. I now have the proofs of the article against acquired contemplation. It will appear in the May issue of *Ciencia Tomista*. We shall see what God disposes. This first article is as moderate as possible. Pray that all will be to the greater glory of God and the good of souls and that our opponents will open their eyes to the light.

Without any time for more and with greetings to all the nuns, I bless them and commend myself to your prayers.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

13.
LOVE ALONE SUFFICES

Deusto
May 20, 1924

Dear Father:

May God reward you for the contents of your last letter. Sister Pauline joins me in this wish because of the article you sent her. On reading it, she could not help crying, because her soul experienced an emotion she had never felt before. Your blessing and your signature, Father, gave value and efficacy to my article. Let us give thanks to God who has deigned to make use of us in order to do good to souls, and especially to make use of me, his poor, ignorant and ungrateful creature. And to think that the more vile and wretched I see myself, the more I trust in God and the more animated and powerful I am for winning souls to the love of Jesus. Yes, Father, this is so. The less good I see or find in myself, the more content I am, convinced that whatever I give to others I must draw from the fountain of all true good — God.

What marvelous things God would do for all souls if, ceasing to look at the clay from which we are formed, they would fix their gaze on him, passing beyond everything with a generous flight of love in the firm confidence that his paternal riches are always at the disposal of us his children.

After God, how obliged I am to you. I sometimes think, when I am writing to you, that perhaps you will not answer, because you do not wish to waste any more time with me. And then, when your letters arrive, they always come as a surprise. Thank you, Father. But this does not suffice, because Jesus says that the spiritual good one receives can be repaid only by doing good for the soul that does us good. Consequently, Father, I would like to do some good for your soul. I would like to give it more to God, because only he is and will be our fitting reward forever. Whoever gives us anything less than God, gives us nothing. Rather, he deceives us, because he makes us suffer and experience more deeply the emptiness in our soul.

On reading your last letter, I was pleased and touched with your expression, "I don't know what life is mine; I forget everything." But you do not forget your All, and he alone is necessary. We can always abstract from everything else and it is good to do so, peacefully and without remorse, because these are the signs that our souls actually possess God. If they did not, desiring him alone as we do, we would not be able to forget about the means to reach him. And so, Father, do not let that trouble you. When we forget to do what we desired to do, let us leave it, without being upset or thinking that on that account we love God less or are less loved by him. Love does not consist in that, but that God be the goal of all our works and can do in and with us what he pleases. And certainly, Father, your life is nothing more than this, "a life hidden with Christ in God." If it were not so, who could give such power and efficacy to the work you do? And if at times this wretched individual suggests something to you with the confidence of a daughter, it is that you, true "salt" for Jesus, may season it with your judgment and give it a taste and flavor so that other souls will benefit. Also, there may be times when it will help and serve you. I don't want to deprive your soul, which is so well disposed, of an outstanding source of merit; namely, that when you learn of anything good, you approve it and desire to practice it and encourage others to practice it also. If you were to do nothing more than this, you would receive a great reward from the Lord, who desires love more than works. I pity those ministers of God who do not understand this, but focus all their efforts on doing great things and look on everything else with indifference or even coldness. If they only knew how much this impedes the action of grace. If they would only experience and taste love, which is often hidden in insignificant and little things.

How much I suffer from the thought that the same thing that wounded my heart could produce the same effect in many others. And how I would like to

send forth a wave of love to all those souls who remain cold and insensible, because they are not properly disposed. Father, if I tell you these things, it is that we may suffer together the pain of a love that is ignored. It is possible to unite the great things with which you are constantly occupied with the little things of which I am speaking. And you really do this, because your docile and flexible heart always responds to the workings of grace, although you do not notice it.

What discouragement I feel when I encounter souls in which love cannot work. And to think that so little is required for this to happen. It is not necessary to work, to suffer, to make examinations, to recite prayers, or to perform any other pious practice. Sometimes, rather, it is necessary to abandon everything in order to give more freedom to love, which makes one forget everything else. The only thing necessary is to keep one's spirit ready to let itself be led. To make ourselves little, always ready to open our mouths like the little birds that I see in their nest from the window of my cell, eagerly accepting the food that the mother bird brings them. And how often the divine Dove brings precious morsels to those souls! And how quickly they will recognize him, from whatever direction he comes and in whatever way; and with what longing they will receive him! How I would like to tell all of them what the Lord does and how little he asks of his own.

But I leave these thoughts in order to tell you what I intended to tell you when I started this letter. The Lord wants me to forget my soul, as something that no longer belongs to me. Therefore do not be surprised if I tell you nothing. Everything of myself I leave to the Lord so that I can occupy myself with others, as he desires. At each moment it seems that he is saying to me, not "Love me" as he did previously, but, "Win souls to my love." Sometimes people come here and ask to speak with me. I go down to the speak-room and I see immediately that it is not I they want, but God and his love. Then I do not know where to obtain what I want to give them. I feel empty and don't know what to say. With a simple act I place my nothingness in God and I listen for some moments in silence to what they tell me, and then I speak. And they always end by saying that what I tell them does them good. I have no doubt that this is so, because seeing that I am so void of goodness, I say: "It is the Lord who does it."

Sometimes, Father, I think that if I were to become a saint, the most extraordinary thing about me must be the simple and hidden way in which the Lord has always guided my soul. And now he is simplifying things even more. I am very grateful to the Lord for that, because I understand that if we can become saints and love God by a variety of paths, the one the soul should esteem most is the one by which the Lord leads it. I appreciate and love my path very much. I love it because it is the path of love, because love works in it solely and exclusively, and because it is the best way to attract souls to the love of Jesus. And who is not attracted by what love does? Only he who is ignorant of what love and love alone does and can do. When a soul has understood that love alone suffices because it contains everything, with what joy it leaves everything else and gives itself to this love. This is what I shall teach souls, here on earth and later from heaven. How many there are who drag a heavy burden that oppresses them. How many there are who are discouraged and depressed by difficult and painful effort. Poor souls! Everything could be accomplished in an instant if they would abandon themselves to love, if they would become enamored of him who *"in terris visus est, et cum hominibus conversatus est"* [1] only to be loved.

Father, we at least should give ourselves completely to Love and leave everything else without any remorse. Let us abandon everything that is ours; let us flee from everything that pertains to ourselves and follow only that which pertains to God, to Jesus, to the divine. What a gentle, delicate, secret, lovable and sweet force, though sometimes painful and terrible, which always attracts and enchants us and destroys our taste for anything else. This

[1] "Was seen upon earth and conversed with men."

and nothing else is God; this is what we ought to seek and then abandon ourselves to it blindly if we wish to live in love.

But what am I saying? I speak of love and I don't know what love is. I do not know if I myself am on this path or if I truly love. But I am not asking about this, Father, because it doesn't matter whether I know it or not. If I do not love, I shall try to make others love through me and experience the love of Jesus. Then I shall be able to say with you: "I do not know what my life is." But the Lord will know, and that suffices for me and it should suffice for both of us. What would it profit us to know? Nothing at all. Whenever we are concerned about ourselves, even in holy things, we waste time and lose love. Nor does it matter whether we have the satisfaction of knowing whether we truly love; it suffices to know that we are loved by God and to believe this even when we do not experience it.

Also, when I make my visits to the Blessed Virgin, she wants only love and I give it to her. It is impossible to imagine what I experience when I place myself before that fountain of the water of eternal life, most holy Mary. Sometimes I cannot even pronounce her sweet name. I look at her in silence and offer her the great void of my nothingness. And there, precisely in that nothingness, is where I find everything. I seem to hear at that time: "In your nothingness is your God, everything that can now satisfy you. What you imagine and think, believing it to be something, is not so in God; everything will be taken from you." Therefore my nothingness consoles me, because I see that nothingness is the one thing that most closely approximates God and makes us understand and taste him exactly as he is in himself.

And the visits of love, Father? I see that you forget. It does not matter, for you are always under the mantle of Mary. Hide me there also, because although I do not have that privilege of the sons of St. Dominic, [2] I am a daughter of the sorrows of Mary and the fruit of the Passion of Jesus. I shall make your visits for you.

Asking your blessing, I remain your affectionate daughter,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
June 30, 1924

Dear Father:

What will you think when you read this letter? I beg you not to think anything until you have consulted with Jesus, because only in union with him are things well understood. And if you think I am too daring, I shall say you are right and shall ask your pardon, realizing that it is your goodness that impels me to this daring and my great desire to love God very much and that he be loved. I want to make my life a unique and constant cry: "To die or to go forward!" Yes, let us say that together, dear Father. How painful it is not to go forward in love. Better a thousand times to die.

For some time now I have been thinking of asking you whether you would like to make the vow of the love of God. As you know, I have already made it. And now, during the month of the Sacred Heart, this thought has taken greater hold of me and I decided to suggest it to you, not only for the good of your soul, but that you will help me and teach me to sing the canticle of love to God. For to tell you the truth, I have lost the tone and do not know how to love.

This vow of love consists, as you will see from the brief formula I am sending you, in living a life of love and not desiring to live except to love; to have the love of God as the only goal of all our works, asking that our life be consumed as a holocaust of love, that is, to live and to die of love. When I consider Jesus asking, "Peter, lovest thou me; do you love me more than these?", when he was about to entrust to him the greatest office there is — the

[2] St. Dominic is said to have had a vision of the souls in glory and all the Dominicans in heaven were under the mantle of Mary.

government of his Church — I realize how necessary love is if one is to do anything for God and work for his glory.

The purpose of the vow is to make reparation to the love of our heavenly Father offended by the lack of esteem and indifference with which his first commandment is regarded. [3] In reality, it should be the source of the greatest joy and glory of mortals — that God should want to be loved by us! Let us seek by this vow to console God for such ingratitude, accepting this divine precept as the most tender and surest expression of his love, obliging ourselves to observe it under vow, and in this way beginning the eternal hymn of the heavenly Jerusalem.

I was 18 years old when I made this vow. A confessor decided to release me from it, but Jesus told me to make the vow again when I could find another confessor who would permit it; and I did so. By means of this vow, love grows stronger and is more firmly and permanently rooted in the soul, increasing in intensity at each moment by reason of the vow, since everything that we do is turned into love. As regards obligations, there are none except to be faithful to the will of God, living and doing everything out of love, so that every beat of our heart is a renewal of these intentions.

One day when I said to Jesus that it did not seem necessary to institute the Holy Eucharist in order to unite himself with our souls, since the soul can be united and transformed into him more by love than by Communion, I heard his voice say within me: "Holy Communion is like a kiss or a sensible sign of love and it pleases me that creatures, while they are on earth, should love me not only spiritually but also by some external sign." Thus, while nothing more is required to fulfill the vow than what I have said, to please Love even more, it would be well to kiss repeatedly the crucifix, the rosary, the holy habit or anything that pertains to the service of God, such as the vestments used in the celebration of Mass. All this, done with love, is what Jesus asks for the fulfillment of the vow, and that one repeat frequently: "My God, I love you. Mary, my Mother, give me love."

Father, if you accept my suggestion, I shall consider it one of the greatest favors the Lord has granted me. A special union would be established between us. We would be like a single branch of the Vine, producing abundant fruits of love. And if I go to heaven first, I will reward you for everything. And if you go first, our sweet Mother will repay your great charity in helping this poor soul to love God.

Asking your pardon and humbly begging your blessing,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
July 2, 1924

Dear Father:

How many things I should tell you, but I cannot. My little lambs, [4] recently entered from the world and anxious to learn about religious life, keep me talking all day long, leaving me scarcely any time for writing. All for Jesus!

How many reasons I have, Father, to love and give thanks to Jesus; but in spite of this, I do not love him. This ungrateful heart is as cold as a stone. I have been suffering somewhat from rheumatism these days but I suffer more from not loving Jesus. This morning the doctor came. The Prioress was fearful, but I was not, for my heart suffers more from the second evil than from the first. And if I should die, then all my heart's martyrdom would end and I would be able to love God and make him loved as much as I desire. I think I could do more good for souls by dying than by living, but I do not ask anything, for although I have no desire to live, I am not worthy to die and be united to God. What shall I do then? Patience and suffering until Love has pity on me and takes me to himself.

[3] Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, thy whole soul, and with all thy mind and strength.

[4] Referring to the novices and postulants.

Father, are you having doubts about my soul? Sometimes I have doubts and I am afraid that I do not express things well and have not done so from the very beginning. During these doubts I have asked the Lord to make you know my soul very well and to give you some sign that it is his spirit that works in my soul. I prayed for this very much on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And this, Father, is what the Lord wants me to tell you: "Father also has desired a sign sometimes, but tell him that it is not necessary, and if he desires one, it is this: *simplicity.*" If a soul that goes forward does not seek and cannot find God except by this way, that is a clear sign that it is approaching him. As regards myself, you will know whether or not I am proceeding along this path.

What I experience is less need of things in order to go to God; in fact, they are obstacles and they disturb me, because I realize that God, the soul, and its operations, are very different from what the creature thinks or does. There is no word to express such a simple manner of acting or of understanding God. For that reason I prefer to say nothing.

On the feast of the Blessed Trinity my mind was elevated several times to a consideration of this profound mystery and I understood that its essence is love, love for men, and that only by love can men penetrate those secrets and understand how God, one in essence, has manifested himself in three Persons in order to make himself better known and loved by his creatures. Mysteries of love!

I must end, Father, and how many things I have yet to tell you. If you are coming here, as you said, do not bother to write. The hope that we shall soon see each other and speak together makes the sacrifice sweet.

Together our souls will rest a little. Bless your poor daughter.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in The Eucharist

Deusto
July 20, 1924

Dear Father:

This morning, when I arose, as soon as I had said the *"Regi saeculorum* immortali," [5] as commanded by our holy rule, these words came to my lips spontaneously: "O Jesus, I love you and I offer myself to you without reserve, body and soul, for the operations of your love." Accepting my offering, Love made me feel his precious but painful operation in my body and soul. One who has not felt the strong hand with which this divine artist works is unable to understand what suffering he causes and the means that he uses.

Everyone says — and it is true — that the sensible abandonment of God, the apparent loss of the unique Good that the soul loves, is very painful. The soul cannot feel or perceive his divine presence in anything. But Father, I would like to say to those who suffer: "Have you experienced the sufferings produced by the presence of God, when in the light of this God of infinite holiness, one sees his own nothingness in his misery, ingratitude and sin?" This, Father, is what my soul experiences now. God is near, but in what a manner! It seems that he wants to consume me, destroy me, but without ever doing it. Yet, to be destroyed and annihilated before him would be the greatest consolation. I remember, Father, the sufferings of which you spoke in your book, *The Mystical Evolution*, and how profitable and necessary they are because of the purification they produce in the soul. But I do not know what they can produce in my soul, for I see clearly that they are punishments for my infidelities, for not loving a God who loves me as tenderly as if I existed only for his love.

Yes, in making me see how much he loves me and in showing me his goodness, he causes me to suffer greatly. It seems incredible, but it is so. How painful it is to see oneself loved so tenderly and at the same time to see that one is unworthy of such love and that it is impossible to reciprocate such

[5] "To the eternal King of the ages."

love. When Sister Pauline reveals to me her painful state of insensibility and inability to find God, since she cannot perceive even a trace of his presence, I think: "If you only knew what God is and how he sometimes makes himself felt."

Perhaps you will think, Father, that one who experiences God rejoices in an ocean of delight in his divine presence. No, it is not that way, or it is not always that way. It may be so for some pure soul, but ordinarily when God makes himself felt by the soul, he produces incredible and inexplicable sufferings. I have to state it that way; otherwise I could not tell you what I experience. May God enable you to understand the meaning of my words. I speak freely because I am speaking to you and not to others who, not understanding the meaning of what I say, could be shocked, become afraid of God, or grow cold in the desire to be united with him. But only he is afraid of the sufferings of love who has never experienced them, because one who has experienced them will not desire anything except that they increase, since only in that way can one find relief. To desire anything else is absolutely impossible.

At various times I have thought of writing about the sufferings of love, as my heart experiences them — rather, the sufferings and delights of love. How many things I could say about this! I know that you already understand this, but it is always consoling to hear what the heart feels. And your heart, like mine, is experiencing both of these things, without being able to say which one is more sweet or more painful.

The Prioress has forbidden me to write any more because she fears it will injure my health. She thinks that I am ill. She forbids me to observe the fast prescribed by our rule and frequently does not allow me to rise at night for Matins or perform other penances. On the other hand, all the religious are saying to her: "Mother Magdalen gets paler and thinner each day; there is something wrong with her." Then the Prioress takes all the measures that her charity suggests to her. But it seems that the more they take care of me, the worse I get. I have no pain and no one knows what could be wrong with me. It is not only my body, because at the same time I find myself in such a state of confusion and annihilation that the Lord seems to want to dissolve me by his presence. But I do not cease to give myself to the operations of his love by frequently renewing my offering, without desiring anything else.

On the feast of St. Mary Magdalen we had a celebration. The Prioress gave us a treat and asked me to come with the novices to recreate with the whole community. I was in a state of great confusion and didn't know where I was, though I pretended to join in the celebration. My spirit was seeking the eternal feast of love and asked Jesus to say to me, as he did to the saintly penitent, the *"dimissa sunt ei peccata multa quia dilexit multum,"* [6] and also: "I shall enable her to inflame many hearts with the fire of my love, because she has loved much." If he does not grant me this now, he will surely grant it after my death. Sometimes it seems that the Lord says to me: "It is a right that I have given to love, that it is able to realize all its desires, and I cannot fail to comply."

Father, have you overcome your fear of making the vow of love? When our heart wants only to love sincerely, it is not necessary to reflect so much before deciding. How powerful love is! It consumes everything and transforms everything, even one's faults and defects. What expansion and freedom are found in love! Indeed, they themselves are love, because they confirm the infinite goodness of our God.

Hence, Father, do away with fear, because where there is love there can be no sin. Do you perhaps think that I, in spite of all my vows, do not commit many faults? Yes, I commit them; but I immediately reject them from my soul, because I cannot allow anything else to be in the place where my God dwells. And to this end I make use of the great means the Lord has given us

[6] "Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much."

and it is always at hand, although many do not know how to make use of it: *love*. I make acts of love and confidence in the goodness of God, and before this divine fire, all stains immediately disappear and I go forward, confounded and humbled, but without ever departing from the path of love. And when this fire or this divine Sun illumines and warms my soul, that is when it suffers most at not being able better to correspond with love. But it does not withdraw from that state, in spite of the fact that the divine presence seems to want to destroy and annihilate it. Striving to live habitually in this state is the way in which this beautiful vow is fulfilled, and everything is done, everything can be done, and everything is found to be done under the powerful influence of love. And when one least suspects, God makes one see and understand the value of this life of love. And then how the soul regrets the time wasted in being concerned with self, when by throwing itself blindly upon love, everything could be achieved without effort.

Father, let us widen our hearts. That is what love desires and commands. It even seems to want us to forget that we are sinners, for it is certain that as long as we consider the odious and repulsive stain that sin has impressed upon us, we shall not have the courage to rise up, to fly and seek rest in Love. What things I say to you, Father! But God knows that there is no other way for us poor creatures to speak about love.

Father, I commend my little flock to you. Give me your holy blessing, in which I place such confidence, so that the Lord will give me his grace and never let the infernal wolf attack this little flock or permit that any degree of love he wishes to give to these souls may ever be lost through my fault. I have placed my difficult task under the protection of *Virgo Fidelis, Janua Coeli.* [7] From her, my Mother and Mistress, I expect everything. And how frequently I feel the need to cast myself at the feet of my heavenly Mother to commend to her my soul and those who have been confided to my care. This is what consoles me and gives me strength in my physical and moral depression. Yes, Father, my only consolation and support in these moments are at the feet of the most holy Mary, my sweet Mother, and in the Stations of the Cross, which I never fail to make several times each day. A few minutes suffice for this. I wish that you also would do this and we could be united in that practice. It is on Calvary that we learn to love one another truly.

I send you greetings from the Prioress and the community, and humbly ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
July 29, 1924

Dearest daughter in "sweet Jesus, Jesus love" (as St. Catherine of Siena used to say):

May he be always with you as a seal on your heart and your arms so that all your life and work may be love.

I was greatly consoled and inspired by your description of those sweet martyrdoms of love and I wish you would write down all your experiences as soon as the Prioress permits and when you have the strength to do it.

You should be very grateful to all the nuns for their charity, and since you are so weak, as I noticed when I saw you, you should take all the rest and nourishment that you need in order to recover. Only when you see clearly that you get worse with all this care and that it is all a work of purifying love — then God will one day leave you completely cured — only with this certitude should you ask the Prioress that you be allowed to follow your ordinary life. But for the time being, I desire that you take all the nourishment you can, at least until we see each other again, which I hope will be early in September, when I shall finish a retreat in Santona.

On the feast of the Assumption I plan to take the vow for a definite period

"Virgin most faithful; Gate of heaven."

in a form that will not cause doubts or anxiety, namely, to strive to remain always in that disposition and make acts of love when I think of it. We shall then see whether the Lord will rid me of my insensibility for everything good, because the only good I see in myself is simple desires and what I write for the good of others. So I fear that your heart is deceived in regard to my dispositions. Regarding your own, I can assure you that they are never better than when they cause you to experience the effects or impressions of divine holiness. Then it is really impressed on the soul so that by participation it can also be truly holy. Therefore, be at peace and give yourself completely to the work of love in body and soul. Then love will move your tongue so that you will be able to say what is most helpful to your little flock and the souls God sends to you from outside.

And when you feel moved to write about the sufferings and delights of love, and have the strength and the permission to do so, follow this motion, because that is more important than the new biographies, which are not urgent and can be done later.

That is all I have to say to you today. Be encouraged and do not believe that those sufferings of divine love are punishments. They are not, and you can be sure that they are the work of love itself, which thus plays with souls and, by tormenting them, arouses greater love.

May he take full possession of both of us and in him I bless you.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Father John G. Artintero, O.P.

Deusto
August 3, 1924

Dear Father:

We have received everything that you sent to us. A thousand thanks for everything and may Jesus reward you. When I asked him: "My Jesus, how shall I repay you?", he answered: "Love me." And truly, Father, only by loving God and by making ourselves holy can all our debts be paid in one stroke. Thus also I shall try to repay you, who in the midst of so many occupations, steal the time to be concerned with me.

Time. And what is time? Before God, the years and the days of our life, which sometimes seem so long, are no more than a brief instant he grants to man so that he can make an act of love which should comprise his whole life, which is only a point lost in eternity or a drop of water in the immensity of the ocean. And for this point or this drop of water, how many times we are preoccupied and concerned, forgetting that act of love, which is the only thing God asks of us and which would fulfill all his eternal plans for his poor creatures. To accomplish this one act which the Lord asks of us is the purpose of the vow of love which you, Father, have resolved to make. And how greatly I am consoled by your resolution to overcome your little fears and trust in God, who begins and will finish the work. This is certain, dear Father, and I know it from experience, but it gives me great consolation to hear it from you.

In your last letter I saw you as a little boy who lets himself be guided by his Father after hearing the suggestion of his daughter. How pleasing to Jesus is this humility in his servants. This is what he wants to find in them in order to begin and continue his work. So he has disposed, in his infinite wisdom, that we should need each other and should help each other, fulfilling in this way the command to love one another as he has loved us. Jesus has loved us by leading us to God; and only in doing the same thing — leading each other to God — do we love each other truly and the way that Jesus wants us to love each other. Therefore, dear Father, let us strengthen as much as possible the union of true love between us, putting aside all fear, because we more easily fail by not loving each other as much as Jesus wishes than by refusing, out of false fear, to express to each other the love that helps us better fulfill the precept of charity. For if it is true that fear is the beginning of wisdom, it is no less true that charity is the fulfillment of the law, and we should not stop at

the beginning if we wish to reach the end.

I like the idea of specifying obligations in order not to expose ourselves to commit faults; for example, to make a fixed number of acts of love of God. Since I read that in your letter, I have also tried to do so. But let me tell you something which I am more certain of as I grow in the knowledge of God's goodness: if one day we should forget anything, we should not think we have failed in our vow. That is not the essential thing. Jesus grants much freedom to love, a freedom that he does not give to anything else. Not only does he grant it, but love itself demands it, because without freedom, love becomes petty and restricted.

It can happen and it will certainly happen, especially in the midst of your many occupations, as also to me, that we shall not think explicitly of the vow or of acts of love. But we do not fail on that account or cease to fulfill our promise. The heart to which this obligation pertains, frequently fulfills it without our adverting to it. God wishes us to love him always, without interruption and at every moment, but he does not always ask of us the same love nor that we love him in the same way. Sometimes it is an ardent, sensible love, full of impatient longings; at other times it is so tranquil or insensible that we scarcely advert to it. One time he is pleased with our humble love, so confident and supported by his powerful arm that we face everything with courage and feel that we can do anything. At another time we express our love with words, thoughts or affections, or if unable to do any of these things because we are as hard and insensible as a rock, with patience and with trust in his infinite goodness. In a word, in order to preserve one's peace of heart with tranquillity and serenity of spirit, it is necessary to give freedom to love and to love each day, each hour, each moment without doing violence to ourselves, but sweetly and gently, as the heart desires. In this way the heart is most disposed to love and to receive God, who as the supreme cause communicates power to the soul, gives it movement, directs it and teaches it how to love.

I have also realized that it is necessary to believe in the Love of God; never to doubt it or to think that he loves us less because of our unworthiness, defects and failures. No, he loves us just the same and we can also love him the same, even after those faults which love destroys in an instant and so are incapable of diminishing the powerful force of love. Until one is fully convinced of this point, he cannot live the life of love continuously.

Frequently the sad sight of our great misery is presented to us. If it causes us to turn from love somewhat to look at self, we waste time and we interrupt that one act of love which should occupy us exclusively. Once we are accustomed never to stop for any reason, and much less because of our miseries, but simply to let ourselves be carried by love, which is always ready to move us if we offer no resistance, we have done everything, because love does everything. It is the one act which fulfills the whole purpose of our life.

What is most proper to love is interior silence. When the words on our lips cease, the faculties are quiet, and everything, both interiorly and exteriorly remains in silence, then love enjoys more freedom. It has the mastery of us and we are subject to it. To preoccupy ourselves then with doing the things we proposed to do would be foolish and impossible. It would be tantamount to resisting and obstructing love. And so, when Father Arintero, although it does not seem so to him, says that he does nothing or feels nothing, that is when he actually loves more and better. Consequently, have no fear about your insensibility; love does not want anything else to be absolute master of us. And in order to fulfill our vow better, we should offer it to the Lord together, as if we were one person. Then, if one of us is a bit slothful in fulfilling it, the other will supply and we shall never fail. And I more than anyone else need someone to help me and supply for me.

If in union there is strength, this is all the more so in the case of love, to which God our strength is always united. So I shall unite myself to you on the day you have chosen, in order to renew my vow also and to ask the holy

Virgin, our sweet Mother, to help us, that we trust in her, and that as the Mother of love she will be our teacher, showing us how to love Jesus. And if we fail in anything, that she should supply for us by her ardent and perfect love.

Regarding my health, although there are days when I have to exert terrible effort in order to eat, I seem to be better. I am obeying you and the Prioress, and I think that my sufferings (if they are such) are caused partly by God, who desires love, and partly by my physical weakness. And so, in order not to deceive myself, I do what they wish and keep silent. When you come, we shall speak of this. A month passes quickly and we shall once again have the great consolation of being together for a little while. How good Jesus is!

Your affectionate daughter asks your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in The Eucharist

Deusto
September 11, 1924

Dear Father:

Your visits always leave holy impressions on my soul. This last time caused me to experience God for some days as tender and loving as in the past; but then this presence passed and I was left only with a desire for him deep in my soul, a desire that was scarcely sensible but caused me to say: "How great you are, my soul; nothing satisfies you, neither persons nor things, however great or beautiful or holy; they are all small to you." Then I add: "My heart, created things cannot give you God; they can only torment you and leave you with a greater hunger for him. Ascend to God, who alone can satisfy you." And then I leave everything and forget everything and remain in him who alone suffices and in whom I find rest and peace. This, Father, is the state of my soul; I don't know how to explain it in any other way. It must go directly to God and remain there because to stop elsewhere makes it restless and weighs it down. Each day I must rise higher above all things and seek rest in this only Good in whom all good is contained.

As to my physical state, since I am living the full observance without any dispensation, I feel very well. Could it be because of my former precautions? I do not know.

I have told you, Father, how I am in spirit and that physically I am well, but I say this to everyone. To the Father of my soul I must say more: I am consumed by an interior zeal that all souls should love God, to make them realize how much God loves us, what he does for his creatures, and how they are afraid to abandon themselves to his paternal arms and rest in his tender love. Life is so short! There is so brief a time in which we can give God the one thing that he asks of us: love — recognition of his infinite goodness. And we let the time pass, even knowing that it can never return and that the loss of that time is irrecoverable. Although the souls that do not know this goodness perfectly can be saved, the Lord must do violence to his paternal love in order to perfect by fire many souls that he wanted to perfect on earth with his love. And what is it that holds them back? They concentrate on themselves, their own miseries and the weakness of our human nature, which God permits so that they will prompt us to run to him more readily so that he will free us from them. But instead of this, we stop at our nothingness, our sins, our misery, and focus on self, with the result that we are discouraged at seeing that we frustrate the designs of God. And how can anyone help but suffer at seeing this?

When I stop to consider it, I do not know what my spirit feels; and in order that it may suffer more with him, God sometimes presents those souls to me, saying: "See how many souls lack confidence in my love because they doubt my infinite goodness." Then I would like to do something, but I see how incapable I am of enlightening these souls and convincing them that Jesus asks only confidence and love. These sufferings and many others are what I want to discuss in the articles you have asked me to write, and I have already begun, though I don't know when I can finish them, because of lack of time.

Almost every day the Lord sends people to me, so that I have to go down to the speak-room. Also, I have a great distaste for writing these articles and I don't know why. I think it is due in part to my fear that someone will find out who wrote them, and since I must speak of very personal things, most of which I have experienced, I am unwilling that anyone find out who is the author. I know that this comes from my inperfections and is a sign that as yet I am not dead to self, as Jesus wishes, or abandoned to the safe hands of the Father he has given me. Lord, I sometimes think, if anyone should discover that a Passionist nun, who is supposed to be dead to the world and live only to immolate herself in a hidden way and in silence, is writing articles for a magazine! But I also understand and I know that Jesus is absolute Master of all — nuns, men religious and lay persons — and can make use of anyone he wishes in any way he wishes without anyone having the right to say to him: *"Cur ita facis?"* [8] Moreover, he has more particular rights over me because of the vows I have taken and because of the unconditional surrender that I have made of myself, placing myself under the power of his divine love. How often, Father, in the secrecy of my soul, God and I have promised each other great things — so great that I dare not speak of them.

They are the promises of love, a love that must give and receive. Jesus has given and asked and promised love, and I have done the same to him. For his part, Jesus is faithful and will not neglect to fulfill all his promises or satisfy all my desires. And here is a proof of it. You will remember, Father, that I once wrote to you that in reading in your book, *The Canticle of Canticles*, that the Lord grants some souls a spiritual maternity, I desired to be a mother in this way — to be able to have spiritual children and offer them to my divine Spouse as the fruit of our sincere love. I understood that he was pleased with my desire and that he would grant it to me. And now, without my having done anything to achieve it, I see that it is realized. Various persons who come to speak with me have already told me: "I look on you as my spiritual mother." I listen and am silent, but interiorly I hear a voice that says: "See whether or not I am faithful in keeping my promises and satisfying your desires." What do you think Father?

And there are other things, small in appearance, that pass unnoticed by those who do not consider the finesse and delicacy which Jesus uses to grant the desires of those who believe in his love and want to be all his. For example, on Christmas Eve I wanted to go to confession, but could not do so without calling for a priest, something I do not like to do and usually I do not do it. I expressed my desire to Jesus: "If it pleases you, send some scruple to one of the nuns so that she will ask of the Prioress permission to go to confession. Then, when the confessor comes, I shall also go to confession." At the end of Vespers, when we were leaving choir, a Sister said to me: "I would like to ask permission of the Prioress to go to confession. Do you want to go also, so that the confessor will not say that he had to come just for me?" And I responded: "Blessed be God, who has heard my desire."

Father, let us love, let us love very much. Let us be more and more united to God through love and he will fulfill all our desires — ardent desires to make God known to souls and to open to all the treasures of his infinite riches. Let us cast ourselves into the flames of eternal love and let us sing to God the canticle of his mercy. Instead of crying out to deaf and blind creatures who do not want to hear our voices, let us cry to him who always listens and smiles with satisfaction, thus consoled for the ingratitude of so many by our poor love.

Father, we have already abandoned ourselves to love. We cannot stop loving God and desiring that our life and all our works be acts of love. What we can do, however, is to plunge ourselves ever more deeply into this divine furnace.

This poor soul wishes to do so in competition with you. Who will win?

[8] "Why are you doing this?"

Father, bless your affectionate daughter.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in The Eucharist

Salamanca
September 25, 1924

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be always with you and let you experience more and more those touches of his love which "in killing, give life."

I was much consoled by your letter and it inspired me during our retreat, which ended today. I am writing you today simply to tell you that the verses pleased me very much and I am only waiting to publish them after I have seen whether they have appeared as yet in any other magazine.

As to my soul, neither the vow nor anything else relieves me of this state of insensibility which is permeated with a kind of stupidity and a distaste and incapacity for everything good. I spent the retreat fighting sleep and foolish imaginations, without being able to do anything else but make acts of love and abandonment, repeating them without feeling any taste for anything except when I read something that touched me. Of this, thanks be to God, I found sufficient in your letter, which inspired me each time that I read it. That is all I can tell you, except that I did not achieve anything more than this resolution: to try to make as many acts of love and sacrifice as possible in order to atone for my faults and avoid new ones, and to be docile to inspirations in order to fulfill the divine plan. But since I am so forgetful, I do not know whether or not it will remain a dead letter.

Pray that God will give me this holy peace together with light and strength in order to know and teach his holy ways and follow them truly and promptly, since time presses.

I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Salamanca
October 12, 1924

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be more and more intimately united with you and completely inflame you with the fire which he came to cast on the earth and make you an instrument for enkindling this fire in many souls.

Take courage at seeing how God plays with you and leaves your soul more wounded with the darts of love that are the more spiritual as they are communicated less sensibly. In this way you will be able to love and serve God in spirit and in truth. So be at peace and let him play. And if you cry out, let it be like the bride, who calls: *"Revertere, revertere."* [9] Many times he will come to you in a very hidden manner, without anyone perceiving that he is working in you a total renewal in the Holy Spirit.

I would like to find consolation in what you tell me and it does encourage me to some extent. But since I see clearly not only my coldness but also my slothfulness, not trying as I ought to be faithful to God in everything or mortifying myself truly, I fear with good reason that much of this insensibility is my own fault. All I see in myself are good desires and the fact that in spite of the insults I have received, for reasons that you understand, [10] I am in good humor, and although they wound my self-love, I feel more moved to charity.

Tell Sister Pauline to open her heart, because that is the only thing that is necessary.

Without time for anything more, I bless you and recommend myself to your prayers.

Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

9 "Come back; come back."

10 Father Arintero refers to the theological argument concerning "acquired contemplation."

Deusto
November 3, 1924

Dear Father:

A few days before reading your letter, and for various reasons, I seemed to sense the sentiments of your soul and I said to you in Jesus: "Father, why are you so sad and discouraged and your spirit so humbled as if you were guilty of many evils? You have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb. Do not be afraid; rise up courageously from that depression in which you find yourself and fly to the arms of Love for which you yearn so much, because a soul is never better disposed to fly to God and God to receive it than when it feels weak, needy, and in the depth of its own nothingness."

I said this to you, Father, in the Lord, and now I see I must also say it to you in writing. Do you not know that in order to love and adore God in spirit and in truth, as he wishes to be loved and served by us, it is necessary to cease to feel whatever is sweet, attractive or sensible in that love until one reaches that state of total insensibility of which you tell me? Love has not yet been able to effect this in me except at intervals because I am a "little girl," and I cry if I am left alone, so he returns to quiet me. But I am sorry that this is the case, and this poor girl rejoices that her spiritual Father gives God the satisfaction of loving him as he desires to be loved — in spirit and in truth — though she herself cannot achieve this.

I also proceed by this way, for there is no other. And if you could only know the days when, to go to God or work for God, I have to rise from the depths and force myself to make acts of faith and hope, for at each instant it seems that I cannot continue, that each of these acts is going to be my last, because I have no strength to do more! But God is pleased to give his grace only for the present moment, so that one can see his own nothingness and his constant need of God. And the soul suffers much, because it seems that its strength is exhausted; but precisely when it needs him, God is there with his grace and the soul does not falter, but goes forward, although, as I have said, it suffers greatly at not seeing the grace that the Lord hides or holds in his hands, to give it when the soul needs it. Father, to go forward on the path of love there is no other way but to live the life of the spirit, in which one makes the greater progress as there is less sensible feeling. One feels without feeling, because one feels in such a spiritual way that we do not know how to distinguish it and we love without perceiving the pulsation of our love. The reason is that the more love is spiritualized, the less one feels and believes that he is loving. This is the way the Lord makes me see it. Judging from what I feel, the fire of love in my soul is being gradually extinguished and at the same time I hear the Lord saying to me in the depth of my soul, but almost without my hearing it: "You have to be like a flaming coal that burns on all sides; I wish to make use of you in order to inflame many other souls." And then I say to myself: "How is this possible, when the fire is going out in my own soul?" And then I understand that it is not going out, but the Lord is changing it, or making it burn in another way. And then I remember the words, *"Quomodo fiet istud?"* [11] of the Blessed Virgin, and the answer of the angel: *"Spiritus sanctus superveniet in te, et virtus . . ."* [12]

Then everything is explained and I understand that the operations of the Holy Spirit are very different from anything we can imagine, and that God can and does do all things in souls that believe blindly in his power, which is at the same time goodness and love. I believe this is what God is doing with you, Father. What difference if you have not been aware of the work of God or that it does not seem to you that it is so? God does not always make his creatures understand what he is effecting in them nor is it necessary that they

[11] "How can this be done?"

[12] "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee."

should know. But it is necessary, and very necessary, that they should believe in the power and love of God without seeing or understanding anything. And when we feel burdened with misery and sin, let us remember what God said to his great Apostle: *"Sufficit tibi gratia mea;* [13] my power shines forth in your weakness." Therefore, in order that the power of God may shine forth in us — which should be our supreme and only desire — let us willingly glory in our weakness, thinking and firmly believing that the weaker we are, the stronger we are in God and that the place of our rest, or where we ought to be, is not in ourselves but in God. Then our miseries will not afflict us any more than would a heap of garbage that we have to pass by.

Go forward, Father, and be of great courage. Open wide your heart, which is sometimes depressed. How many signs of love of God and his predilection for you I can see in it. Be firm in your defense of truth, as you are obliged to be, in spite of the opposition of your blind adversaries. But moderate, as you are already doing, the desire that the truth be quickly known; for although this seems good and gives glory to God, sometimes it may give greater glory to God patiently to await his good time and to be charitable toward your adversaries, realizing that every man always has good reason to be humbled and confounded. For although with the grace of God one succeeds in knowing the truth, one always changes it, disfigures it and obscures it by his incapacity to explain it as it is in the eyes of God, lacking the words or precise terminology that show it in all its beauty and power. Our task is to work without ceasing so that the kingdom of the love of God will be extended in the world and in souls. We must be firmly convinced that even the smallest desire and aspiration to this end will never be lost. This poor daughter of yours unites herself to your labors; she supports her Father and says with him and with her whole soul: "God is infinite goodness; he offers to all and wants to give to all his most precious gifts and favors." Anyone who does not think so, restricts the goodness of God and the attribute in which he is most glorified and praised — his mercy toward us, his children, the work of his hands.

What is most pleasing to God and what he recommends to all is to make his goodness known and to teach souls to say: "How good God is!" To this end, we should use every means and avail ourselves of everything because there is never any danger of going to extremes in this. What a sublime work the direction of souls is for you, his ministers. In order to go in search of them, you have left everything, because there is no greater treasure than a soul. He who is convinced of this, approaches the soul and works for its good with delicate care and holy fear, realizing that the divine Master will demand a severe accounting in this regard. There is no greater work than to make souls realize the goodness of God and his limitless love. Love itself demands the sacrifice, and sacrifice secures and strengthens love.

Sacrifice yourself willingly for this purpose. I envy your good fortune and I try to imitate you. How many souls I would like to give to Jesus! If I place any limits on this, I am not happy because I see that neither is Jesus happy. He has died for all so that all will love him.

I grieve when persons read the lives of saints and then say: "That is not for me; they were privileged souls." I have a strong desire to become a saint, but in a simple and ordinary way, without doing more than anyone could do. In this way I could attract souls to God. I look with joy on my past life because I see that although I have received an abundance of graces, all of them have been ordinary and simple ones that any soul could receive. Therefore, I can hope that God will grant my desire. Father, do you want me to ask Jesus to make me a saint in this way?

In conclusion, I am afraid that I may have failed in the respect I owe you, because of what I have said to you or in the way I said it. Kneeling at your feet, I beg your special blessing as a sign of pardon.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

[13] "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Deusto
November 4, 1924

Dear Father:

I am sending you this article and you can do with it what you think best. I finished it some days ago because you had asked that I do it, and your desires, Father, are for me sweet commands and a manifestation of the will of God. Let us see now whether you can satisfy a desire of your poor daughter: that two verses be composed for the morning and afternoon visits to the Blessed Virgin, to be used as prayers by those who prefer poetry and thus facilitate the practice of this devotion to our sweet Mother, who gives me ever clearer proof that it pleases her. For the person who does this, I shall offer two Rosaries and a petition that Mary will reward him with an increase of love. What an immense grace God gives a person when he gives him a great love for the Blessed Mother, and he increases it always.

This is the grace I now receive, and I send you this beautiful and consoling news with joy. Some weeks ago I noticed in myself an increase of love for my beloved Mother. My thoughts fly to her more frequently and my heart beats more strongly when I think of her. I have a greater desire to speak of her and to work for her glory. Let us have a contest in loving her, Father. How generously the Lord rewards anything that is done for the glory of his Mother! I believe that he more easily pardons the faults and imperfections of anyone who does this and ultimately grants the great gift of his perfect love or, what is the same, sanctity. I am very grateful to the Lord for this inestimable grace and I ask him to grant it also to you and to all those whom I most love in him.

In the various periods of my life in which I have received special graces from the Lord, I have noticed that they were always preceded by an increase of love for Mary. Mary has always been for my soul the prelude of new graces and of moments of spiritual enlightenment to draw me closer to God. Even in little things, such as the first article that I wrote for your magazine, all is dedicated to my sweet Mother. And now once again I am realizing that everything that begins with Mary is blessed by God and produces great effects, for all the nuns are enjoying the articles of "J. Pastor" and read them several times because they say that they do good for them. The Prioress herself told me that she liked that author. On hearing this, I experienced feelings of gratitude and of confusion, seeing how the Lord, through you, deigns to use such a vile instrument as myself to do good. Who would believe that such good would come from those articles of mine, even when corrected and edited by you? But truly, nothing surprises me, because I know what the Lord can do if we let him work.

I am now writing the article on the sufferings and joys of love, but I am inclined to surpress the word "joys" and put only, "the sufferings of love." Then, if the Lord gives me life and it seems well to you, I shall write another one on the joys of love. I already know what I want to say and it seems that the Lord has put it in my mind. I do not want to infer that it is not difficult for me to write. It is very difficult and it takes much time, although not so much in thinking of what I want to say as in how to express it. I am encouraged, however, that you always understand your poor daughter.

May it all be for the glory of God and his and our sweet Mother, at whose feet I ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
November 7, 1924

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he always be with you and may the sweet Mother of beautiful love make you run more and more in his footsteps.

I was much consoled by your letter, seeing that the Blessed Virgin is preparing you for new graces. I am also somewhat animated these days and was inspired by a fervor and zeal of the priests at Valeadolid, during the week of spirituality which was held there. I hope that the unity and peace that pre-

vailed will be the beginning of a great spiritual renewal. While there, I completed the list of the Association of Love of Mary, which I am enclosing.

As regards the articles, you may separate the sufferings from the joys of love if you wish. You can write them leisurely and send them to me when God disposes, for I still have many articles to publish and there is no hurry.

Greet the Prioress for me on her feast day and give her this holy card of St. Therese of the Child Jesus as a memento. And with this I must leave you today, wishing you a great increase of love and of graces which our Lord will undoubtedly continue to communicate to you through his Blessed Mother.

Pray much for me and for one of my nephews, who died on October 22. With my blessing for all and confidence in their prayers, I am

Affectionately yours in Christ.
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
December 4, 1924

Dear Father:

I gladly write to you, dear Father, on seeing that your soul is so desirous and well disposed to receive the grace of the Lord, which he in his infinite goodness, cannot help but communicate in abundance. How much I have suffered and still do suffer in this regard because of some souls. Jesus wants to give himself to them, he wants to communicate his light and love to them, but they refuse him because they do not know him; rather, they do not want to know him. It seems impossible that anyone could be so blind as to confuse light with darkness or truth with error. But in spite of this, there are many blind souls.

Father, I experience a fire in my heart which, although it causes me pain and suffering, for others it would be a source of joy and consolation to let themselves be consumed in its flame. But this fire cannot be enkindled except in docile and humble hearts. The lack of humility and docility to grace is what impedes love from taking possession of so many souls and of making them happy. But you are not one of those souls, because you have abandoned yourself to love without fear and you want love to be your only master. How are you doing with the vow of love? Do you feel inclined to make it for always? If we could feel remorse in heaven, it would be because we had placed a limit on love and had not given ourselves to it completely and without fear.

I seem to hear you say: "But I do nothing; I am as insensible as a log, and I fear I am not fulfilling my vow of love." Father, I like this manner of thinking and speaking. But I would say this: "We should not let the state of insensibility or the feeling that we cannot do anything hold us back. This is the most powerful motivation and the best disposition for giving oneself to love without reserve. For love does everything and wants to do everything. It needs nothing else and nobody else, except our consent to let it work freely."

And so you see, dear Father, that there is no reason to fear and no reason for not binding ourselves forever to God by this vow. No, do not fear, because when a soul has known, through God's grace, that without love everything is smoke that vanishes, it is not easy to seek anything else. God himself does not permit it. So let us, without any fear, be united by the holy bond of divine love and God will look with pleasure at the love of our poor hearts as if it were a fire that comes out of one and the same furnace. When one of us passes to the other life, that one will not cease to be united to the one that remains behind. On the contrary, there will be a greater obligation to fan the fire in the one that still remains on earth when the departed one is established in the eternal furnace of love. If I go first, you will see, Father, how well I shall fulfill my obligation. You have given me such consolation on this earth by uniting yourself with this miserable sinner, in order to help me love God.

Sometimes I seem to hear the Lord say to me: "I want you to be a flaming coal that burns on all sides." Then I ask Jesus that my spiritual Father should

be so also. And truly this should be our sole occupation on earth, because it is the only thing that has moved God to draw us out of nothingness and give us our being. It is an obligation we accepted at our holy baptism and was imposed on us a second time at our religious profession.

Try to be a flaming coal by your doctrine and your writing and may those young minds understand it well, [14] thirsting as they do for knowledge, light and truth, so that each doctrine they learn and every new idea that is offered to them will be directed to their growth in divine love. If they do not achieve this, it will all be time wasted, smoke and vanity. They know this already, but it does no harm, Father, to repeat it often. Always end with this: "If we do not love God, everything else is of no avail." The professor does a great good if he can make his students see that the most important, the most inestimable and the most desirable knowledge they can acquire is the knowledge of divine love.

This is also the knowledge that this poor daughter of yours asks her spiritual Father to teach her while, prostrate at his feet, she humbly begs his blessing and sends him greetings for Christmas.

Affectionately in Jesus and in Mary,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
December 6, 1924

Dear Father:

We are rapidly approaching on the wings of time the eternal fountain of love, from which our souls are yearning to drink. Let us rejoice! Another year is coming to an end. Remember, Father, that on January 4 it will be three years since the merciful God permitted the two earthly pilgrims, Father Arintero and Magdalen, to meet so that they could encourage and help each other on the way to the heavenly fatherland. How often during this time, Father, and through your help, God has made his presence felt in my poor soul. In heaven we shall sing: "How good God is, and how great are his mercies!" But for now, we can only be consumed with love for him in the silence of adoration.

I read your beautiful article in *Ciencia Tomista*. With special attention I read the footnote in which there could easily have entered some small particle of the purely human spirit, but thanks be to God, I found nothing in it but the spirit of God. I especially liked your statement: "These questions should be discussed without passion, in the lofty and serene regions of mystical theology." How true this is. Always keep yourself in those lofty and serene regions, defending the truth with sweet and gentle force, filled with charity, for as long as this remains intact — at least on your part — I believe that all things will turn out for the glory of God. Father, when you fear that you may wound this queen of the virtues in any action, it is much better to sacrifice that action to love. It is better to triumph in love than in battle. With love you can conquer the heart of God, and once that is done, everything is won. If at any time some fear concerning the past tries to take hold of your soul, reject it sweetly. Rest calmly in the arms of the heavenly Father and in his paternal love. In doubts and fears of the spirit that may come to us, Jesus has taught me to resolve them by striving with greater effort to practice the virtues, especially sweetness, charity and submission. If we are concentrating on these virtues it is a certain sign that we are united with God and our soul has not suffered any loss. If we were not united with God, the first thing we would notice would be our disinterest in the practice of virtue.

You can see, Father, how many things the Lord makes me understand. I would like to tell you all of them, but it is impossible. This morning, while making the visit to the Blessed Virgin, the Prioress called me. I went at once, saying interiorly to Jesus: "I am willing to leave Mary to come to you when you call me." And Jesus seemed to respond: "And I am happy to receive you

[14] This refers to the Dominican clerical students that Father Arintero was teaching at St. Stephen's in Salamanca.

when you come from my Mother; you will find her again in me." And my soul has experienced other things that I don't know how to describe.

Some days ago one of the nuns asked me about matters of the spirit and showed that she was very desirous for God. I was confused at her questions, but I answered them. When I left her, I said to myself: "With what pleasure, my God, I would give you that soul." And I heard his sweet voice: "If you desire it and you help her gladly, think what my pleasure and my desire must be." I wanted to speak to that religious again, but I felt embarrased, so I decided to write her a few lines, urging her to open her heart and have confidence that God wanted to fulfill all her desires. But before I could give her my note, this same religious came to tell me that she had permission from the Prioress for me to speak with her in her cell at a time convenient for me. I did so, and the Lord spoke and worked in the two of us, as always happens when we are properly disposed by faith and humility. She was very satisfied and asked me to continue helping her. It seems, Father, that this is what the Lord wants now — to give himself to souls through my mediation. And this is also what satisfies the longings of my heart; otherwise I wouldn't know what remedy to give it.

I no longer think of myself. I am like a foolish person. It seems that I do not have a soul to save, but it is because I believe that God has my soul in his hands and he takes care of it. I no longer know how to love him but I want to exert all my efforts to make him loved. To this end, some time ago, it seemed to me that the Lord was asking me to establish a League, which is described in the article I am sending you, so you can kindly correct it and bless it. We started it in the novitiate on November 1, under the protection of All Saints and it seems to have produced good effects. I would like to establish it also with people outside, among various good souls that I know, but I shall wait for your opinion. Please return this copy to me. If you like it and want to make it known, you may do so, without identifying its origin. In case you would want to join in the first group, which consists of myself and my little flock, there is an empty number which I am reserving for my spiritual Father. The obligations are few; you can fulfill them all by a memento at Mass.

In the name of the whole community and in particular of the Prioress and Sister Pauline, I thank you for your kindness. Your poor daughter asks your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
December 15, 1924

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he always be with you and reward you for your letter, which encouraged me to give myself more truly to our Lord with the vow of perpetual love. I shall plan to make it on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, trusting that the holy Virgin will help me to fulfill it. With the vow, I shall feel especially obliged to show a special love for those good friends who still hold to their opinions. It makes me sad and I have never prayed so much for them, since their stubborness is inconceivable. But you poor nuns suffer even more because you see things more clearly. The greatest suffering of all is the loss of peace when not nourished by solid doctrine. This, and this alone, is what encourages me to defend the true doctrine. I hope that my next article in *Ciencia Tomista*, gentle in style but with facts that admit of no rebuttal, will add more light and thereby bring us to agreement.

But since everything is useless without the blessing of God, it is necessary above all that we strive to love him and make others love him and sanctify themselves. I expect no little help from that beautiful holy League, which I approve and want to be counted among its members. I am returning the formula, corrected a little, and I have made a provisional copy for the time being. I must go to Madrid on December 26 and I shall show it to some good souls who will want to join.

I am much consoled at seeing how our Lord wishes you to be more and more forgetful of self and abandoned to his hands so that he can accomplish everything he desires and make of your heart a volcano of love which will inflame many other hearts in a way that we could not even imagine. Who could have said that our first visit, requested by the good Prioress, would have led to this union? I remember it well, and it was not January, but February, because I arrived on the feast of the Purification, after giving the habit to my niece at Casalarreina.

I do not know when I shall make my next visit, but I think it will be in a few months. I shall advise you in advance.

My greetings to all the community, wishing for them a thousand graces and blessings from the Child Jesus and a happy New Year. Affectionately in Christ, I bless you.

Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

14.
OPERATIONS OF LOVE

Deusto
January 15, 1925

Dear Father:

I have been wanting to write to you for some days, but it has been possible only today. Jesus wants me to sacrifice all personal satisfaction when it is a question of doing good for others. Sometimes I have to overcome repugnance, because I am afraid that if I get too involved or if I treat of matters that do not pertain to me . . . But at the same time an interior force impels me, even at the cost of some sacrifice, to console, help and encourage souls. For this reason I have had to write some other letters. They are souls that suffer. They yearn to go to God; they need him, but their confessors hold them back, *commanding* them to practice virtue and overcome repugnances. But in order to sanctify souls, these things must be the fruit of love, produced by love, and not done because he commands them or because they fear to displease the confessor by neglecting them.

How is it possible to sanctify virtue that is practiced in this way — under duress and violence? In my opinion what they should be obliged to do is *love*. I saw this clearly in one of these poor souls that came to see me recently. What a good soul, capable of flying to God by love and of resting in him. But she was oppressed and wearied by the burdens the confessor imposes. He interprets the *"vim patitur"* [1] of Jesus according to his own spirit and not the spirit of the loving Master, who has shown us in so many ways that the violence which opens the gates of heaven and obliges him to come to us is love.

But let us leave this matter, because I would never finish, and I have many other things to tell you. The first is the great consolation I obtained from your last letter. At last we have been pledged to the path of divine love forever. Admit, Father, that if we truly desire to become saints, there is no other means but this: to surrender ourselves to love with a frequent renewal of our surrender, and then let love work. This morning in Holy Communion the Lord showed me this in a singular way. Before Mass a postulant came to ask if she should receive Communion, for she was spirtually upset. I told her that she should ask pardon of Jesus, humble herself, and then receive him with a peaceful conscience, submitting herself to the God of mercy.

Others have also told me their fears of making unfruitful Communions because of their infidelity and hardness of heart. "Let us humble ourselves," was my reply; "we have more than enough reasons for this; but we must never separate ourselves from Jesus, the divine Physician, nor doubt his goodness." Later this thought came to me: It is certain that Jesus loves humility very much but he must also love a bit of variety. If we all go to him lamenting and offering him our nothingness and our miseries, he will get tired of always hearing the same thing. And so, although I felt oppressed by the weight of my miseries, I told Jesus: "I want to rejoice, and this is my song: Come to my soul and I will offer you my glory, my greatness, my power, my riches of infinite price." With these sentiments I approached Communion, and when I had Jesus in my heart, I said to him: "Look, my Jesus, and see whether I am not great, for my soul now contains you; and since you have given to me yourself, your glory and power are also mine. I am rich with the treasure of your precious Blood, the price you paid for me, not only once by dying on Calvary, but now also in offering yourself for me in the Mass, you confirm the value of my soul." I believe that my little joke pleased Jesus, and I repeat it now and then, not for my satisfaction (for I am submerged in the depth of my nothingness), but to make Jesus see that in the midst of that state of self-abasement, I believe in his goodness that descends to me to enrich me with his gifts.

[1] Reference to the statement, "the kingdom of heaven *suffers violence*."

Everything is permitted to one who loves because everything that proceeds from love is always pleasing to Jesus. The same thing happens to me and to you, as far as I can judge from what you say about the Holy League. This makes me happy because I see that the same Spirit governs us and teaches both of us that sanctity is more the work of love than it is the work of our own efforts and that confident supplication to the Lord transforms us into himself. I like to say with St. Peter: *"Domine, jube me venire ad te."* [2] And the purpose of this League is to accelerate by our prayers the *"Veni"* [3] of Jesus, who will sanctify us in truth.

And now, there is something that preoccupies me somewhat and I strongly recommend it to your prayers. Soon we shall have our first canonical Chapter for the election of the Prioress and other officials. Our present Prioress frequently says to me: "Be ready, because you are the one." But I trust in the goodness of the Lord, whom I ardently beg not to let this burden fall on me, although at the same time I am afraid I am too fearful and that God may punish me for not being more abandoned to his hands. So I say to him: "Lord, your holy will be done," although interiorly I add: "May this not be your holy will." Were it not for fear of failing in the vow, since it seems more perfect to accept what the Lord disposes, and also because our holy rule commands it, I would renounce it at once. If you would tell me that I can renounce it, what relief that would give me, and I would no longer be worried about the Chapter. Please pray for me, Father.

I realize that all this is a result of my failure in virtue. Poor Jesus! As if it didn't suffice that he had to endure the failures of others; but I also add bitterness to his afflicted heart. How great must be the suffering that the faults of consecrated persons cause Jesus. I say this because I have known of some religious who do not live as Jesus wishes, especially by their failure to respect authority. I feel such pain at this that it seems that they are pounding my soul with a hammer. And recalling the prayer of Moses, I say: "Lord, forget about me, abandon me, look at me no more, as if I were your enemy; but do not let them offend you any more or displease you by denying you the love they have sworn to you — those souls favored by you with so many graces and from whom you expect love and consolation."

With this sad thought and my heart breaking with suffering, I ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
January 19, 1925

Dear Father:

More than once you have told me that you prefer that I give you an account of my soul in an article. That makes me like the idea also, if in that way you can better understand the state of my soul, although I shall say things with brevity in order not to weary you. For your part, tell me what you think, what you approve and what you do not approve, so that it will serve me as a guide, since I suppose it will be a long time before I see you again.

When you speak to me, Father, your voice reverberates powerfully in my soul. It is God who is revealing his will to me. Therefore, I ask you to tell me in charity whatever you judge opportune, and not to fail to do so because you think they are things that I already know. It is true that sometimes the Lord himself teaches me many things, but when you tell them to me, even if I already know them, they produce in me greater peace and tranquillity and the strength to fulfill them.

I shall begin with external things because they are easier to express. Thanks be to God, I find myself in good health, which enables me to keep the religious observances and follow the common life in all things. Confined as I am in the novitiate, I have little communication with the community or with

[2] "Lord, command me to come to you."
[3] "Come."

the professed nuns. I am with the four novices and postulants most of the time. They and God are the best witnesses of my works. I consult with the Prioress in all matters, and as a result I do not find difficulty in my office, in spite of the fact that it is a great responsibility. Each time that I enter the notitiate, I say a Hail Mary to the Blessed Virgin. She is the novice mistress; I am only her unworthy representative. In May we shall have the Chapter. I do not know what the Lord will dispose for me.

Regarding particular penitential practices, I sometimes wear a penitential band. I have two; one is small, and I usually wear it on the leg; the other is larger, and on Fridays I place it on my shoulders in order to honor Jesus and help him carry the heavy burden of his cross. I am also accustomed to wear the larger one around my neck in reparation for the low necklines of women's dresses and in memory of the rope around Jesus' neck. Now and then I eat bitter leaves of wormwood as a penance for my own and other's sins of the tongue and in memory of the bitter drink they gave to Jesus. As to food, I fast on bread and water on the vigil of the Immaculate Conception and on Good Friday. Outside of that, I observe the fast of the monastery like everyone else. I believe that the Lord wants me to eat little. Years ago I used to eat a great deal because my constitution required it; but now I eat much less, though I take a normal quantity of food and no one takes any notice.

What is sometimes a source of suffering is the little sleep that I get. Our rule provides seven hours, but I sleep so lightly that I wake up at the slightest noise and consequently my hours of sleep are reduced to five or sometimes to four. This causes a certain weakness and bodily sluggishness. But if I say to Jesus that I feel more tired than rested, I seem to hear him say: "But my love has rested." That is because when I cannot sleep, I make acts of love. I wish I could do without sleep entirely. Since I cannot, I have made a pact with Jesus that even while sleeping, my heart will keep vigil and love him. In this way I never cease to love him, renewing my vow of love with every beat of my heart.

So much for external things, which I have described in too great detail. I shall pass on to the interior matters of my soul, for I fear that if my letters are too long, you will not have time to read them. Tell me if it would be better to write shorter letters and less frequently. I do not wish to write for my own satisfaction, but for the good of my soul and yours, Father, since it is the will of the Lord that we help each other in our journey toward him in order to arrive there more quickly. In my relations with people I feel that I must seek not only my own benefit but also that of others, and lead them to God. I always have this in mind when I communicate with anyone.

Love does not let me rest for an instant. It asks and asks; it wants to govern me with an absolute rule and extend its reign. When a soul capable of loving more approaches me, I seem to experience a fire that torments me and obliges me to communicate it. And if I cannot do it in any other way, I do it by suffering from not being able to do it and to bring that soul under the power of love, to be overcome and conquered by it. I think how much Love must suffer if I suffer so. The sufferings caused by love are more intense. There is nothing as active as love because it is a fire, and just as fire finds material everywhere on which to exert its energy, so my soul finds in everything a motive for suffering. And what increases the suffering is that one can hardly describe it. What I am saying to you now is nothing.

I have suffered and am still suffering for a particular soul that is resisting love. One day I realized that everything that I had done for this soul, instead of being beneficial, would be a cause for its greater punishment because of its resistance. The suffering this caused me is inexplicable. It gave me some idea of what Jesus suffered in the Garden of Olives when he saw that his Passion would be useless for so many souls and not only useless, but a reason for greater condemnation. Then the lament of Jesus came to my lips: *"Transeat a me calix iste."* [4] And it seemed that it would have been better not to do

[4] "Let this chalice pass from me."

anything for souls that do not benefit, not to pray or suffer for them, and not to want to do anything more for them. But one knows that this is not God's will, but the contrary. And then the soul in the midst of its suffering also says with Jesus: *"Non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat."* [5]

I realize, Father, that what does not benefit souls for whom I pray, is nevertheless of benefit to me, because through suffering my soul is purified and united to the soul of Jesus, thus effecting that fusion in which we are "made perfect in one." [6] But this does not abolish the suffering, because in love one does not seek oneself; rather, one seems almost to forget his own soul and to think of the many souls that do not love the Lord or love him very little.

As regards my union with God, sometimes I feel closely united with him. External things are separated from me and remain at a great distance. They make no impression on me, or if they do, it is on the surface of something deep and impenetrable — a depth which is experienced as an emptiness but at the same time as a fullness, because it rejects everything else and receives nothing. I think that the sensation of emptiness comes from the fact that the soul is united with God, who is pure spirit and does not admit anything else. And the fullness is due to the fact that God is all things and without him nothing exists, although everything is outside of him, as they are outside of my soul. In a word, Father, I experience an immense distance between the place where my soul is and the place in which I am physically, so that my physical existence seems like a dream or shadow. And in this interior, one experiences and understands realities that are firm, luminous, and as infinite as the aspirations of the soul are infinite, while everything external is limited and small, and hence it torments and afflicts the soul. The soul always asks for more, more; and seeing infinity, it is content. But in the material order, the "more" always has a limit and an end.

I also sometimes suffer periods in which I seem to forget the things that I know pertain to God and the soul. I even forget about the Gospel; I don't know how to say anything; it is almost as if I had never known God. Then I fear that the first state to which I referred, which is almost habitual in my soul, is not a grace of God but the result of my imagination. What do you think, Father?

When I am in this state of stupidity, I see nothing but misery and sin, and I don't seem to know how to free myself from them or where to go for help. Then the words of St. Paul come to my lips: *"Cupio dissolvi,"* [7] and casting myself at the feet of my sweet Mother, I say to her: "Take me to heaven, because I cannot remain separated from you."

At the feet of Mary my soul recovers its strength and fervor, experiencing great and sudden changes interiorly, and I realize that the Lord wants to work in me through his Blessed Mother.

That is all.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
January 30, 1925

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he grant you a truly holy year, filled with graces that will enable you to grow in love and inflame many hearts.

The divine fire will frequently make you forget yourself and your own nothingness, dare to communicate with our Lord with remarkable familiarity, and think only of all the souls that should love him, while trusting in his goodness as regards your own salvation. You should forget your fears regarding the coming election and put yourself in the hands of the Lord so he can dispose of everything in your regard, without your being solicitous about tomorrow. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." In this way you will

[5] "Not my will, but Thine, be done."

[6] Cf. John 17:23.

[7] "I long to be dissolved (and to be with Christ)."

work with greater perfection in all things, our Lord will watch over you, and you will avoid needless suffering if you are not elected. And if you are elected, follow what your rule says and trust in God's help, with which everything becomes easy.

Regarding the faults of persons consecrated to our Lord, he complains about many souls. Therefore it would be well to promulgate the Holy League among priests. On the third Sunday of the month one of our Fathers assembles numerous priests so that they can take part in our monthly procession of the Blessed Sacrament. I intend to speak to them about the League because they are devout priests. Moreover, in Madrid on the feast of the Epiphany and the following day I gave some conferences at our priory and they want me to return. So our Lord is opening the way. And in working for his love, I hope that love will seize my soul and sanctify me. Otherwise I think it is impossible because of the coldness that I feel. But this comes from the mercy of God, because each time I remember the vow of love, I renew it. Yes, I want to be faithful although I am forgetful. I lost the formula that I usually carry with me, so if you can send me another copy, it will be helpful. But do it at your convenience.

When I returned home I found a pile of papers and letters awaiting me and I am also publishing a book entitled *The True Traditional Mystical Life*, which is a compilation of all my articles of recent years and I trust it will do some good. I am kept busy with this and other duties.

I bless all of you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
February 21, 1925

Dear Father:

I awaited your letter with impatience. Since there is so much sickness here, when I saw that the days were passing and your letter did not arrive, I began to fear that you were ill and the whole community likewise shared this fear. In order to reassure ourselves, we sent the post card. We shall not have fear of this kind in heaven. Oh, when at last we are there! It consoles me to think that that moment will soon arrive. How weary my heart is! It desires to love God and everyone with a perfect and eternal love, but this is not possible on earth.

Father, how much this heart of mine suffers! It is in a state of continual violence. It is moved and affected by every little thing — a medal, a holy card, the sound of the bell, even the sight of the other nuns. It is even more moved when I go to confession or Communion. Then I experience more deeply the impact of God, his holiness, his presence in all things, his beauty and greatness. And since it is that greatness with which my soul must be filled, it wants to escape, to be free, to get out of its prison; but since it cannot, it suffers. Sometimes certain laments escape my lips: "O, Beloved, when will my eyes close to this world? When shall I love you with my whole soul?" I don't know what I feel or what kind of suffering this is. Perhaps you will think that this is delight and not suffering. No, Father, it is true suffering, and the Lord sends it to me as such. And I would not wish that it ever be taken from me or diminished, because only here does love find happiness, rest and peace.

It seems that the Lord is constantly telling me that he wants to work in my soul with love alone; that to become a saint, my efforts do not suffice; a much greater power is needed — the power of fire, of the fire of love. And with this power the soul can rise to the summit of the holy mountain, without needing to pass by any other way — of purgation, of night or of day — because love seizes everything and carries it off. Water cleanses and fire purifies, but he who abandons himself to the action of fire does not need to be cleansed, for he becomes not only clean and pure, but renewed and transformed. Only the person who experiences this will ever be able to know and understand how

love works or what it makes one feel and suffer.

I am writing the article on the sufferings of love and I think that the Lord makes me experience them so that I shall better be able to say something about them. But I write reluctantly; I am not satisfied. You, Father, will add what I don't know how to say. How difficult it is! Various things are experienced but it is necessary always to use the same words in order to describe them. But if for this reason I write with reluctance, when I realize that it is done out of obedience, I do it willingly; and also because I think the Lord wants this. Sometimes he reveals things to me about love that leave me in a state of stupidity or sleep, almost unable to open my eyes. And when I do open them, I see things as if I had not seen them for a long time. I think this is due to the fact that I am weary of this earth and all things; and as a tired body seeks rest, so also does the weary spirit. What do you think, Father? When I feel this way, all my fears are gone. I think of nothing but the present moment; and since I desire nothing, I fear nothing and nothing disturbs me.

Regarding my fears concerning the Chapter, the Lord has already made me realize what you advised; namely, live for the moment and let God take care of the future. It consoles me greatly to see how God and his minister agree in guiding my poor soul. Also, how many things one can understand if he lets himself be guided by love! The Lord shows the soul a new way of going to him, a way in which anyone who has a firm will need not be afraid or fear that this way will not suffice for one to become a saint, even a great saint. It is the way of love, which all can enter if they wish. God will make them experience the sweetness of his love, and when he has drawn them to himself, he will leave them in love's power so that it will work in them and lead them to the goal the saints reached, but without all the turnings and twistings that make the path of holiness difficult for so many souls. Almost without realizing it, they will find that everything has been accomplished, and they will reach the height at which the union is consummated. There is little that has to be done by the soul itself — except have faith in love and abandon itself generously to love's action. And the more the soul sees of its misery and nothingness, the more it realizes that love is working. If it does not admit this, it will fall back, because the first thing that love does is show the soul its own nothingness, and the more it takes possession of the soul, the more it reveals this. Father, we are called in a special way to help the Lord in this. Let us assist him with good will and we shall see great things.

I am sending you a letter from Sister Pauline, a beautiful soul who is making much progress in the pure love of God. The more God seems to withdraw from her, the more she loves him and seeks him. And occasionally, in her eyes, I can see that God resides in her beautiful soul.

I am greatly consoled to know that the Holy League has been well received. After God, I am grateful to my spiritual Father, who makes the seed of divine grace fructify by his zeal as a good worker in the vineyard of the Lord. May Jesus increase your strength, grace and fervor so that his love will consume you, together with your poor daughter, and lead you to heaven where we shall contemplate with joy the fruit of our efforts to make God loved.

Together with this letter, I am sending you a new copy of the formula of the vow of love of God, as you requested.

Asking your blessing for your affectionate daughter,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

VOW OF THE LOVE OF GOD

O God, my Creator and supreme Lord, I give you thanks for the precept you have given me to love and above all things, threatening me with terrible punishments if I do not fulfill it. I understand, Lord, the paternal love that is reflected in this first commandment and I accept it with all possible gratitude, obliging myself to observe it by vow. Yes, my God, I make the vow to love you, to love you forever, to love you with all my heart and above all things; and I shall strive that this vow be perfectly fulfilled in heaven where, by a

sweet necessity, I shall be obliged to love you for all eternity.

Accept this vow in reparation for the ingratitude of men to your eternal love, which is unknown and offended, and to supply for the love that your creatures deny to you.

Mary, Mother of beautiful love, teach me to know and always to love Jesus more.

My guardian angel, obtain for me the grace to fulfill this vow with all possible perfection.

Salamanca
March 5, 1925

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be with you always and you with him, in the desert and in the cenacle; and with him may you go wherever love leads you.

Meanwhile continue to be carried by that same love, in whatever way you experience it, whether joyful or suffering or with joyful suffering; and whether you have any strength or not, always go forward and be confident, the more so as you feel helpless and need to be assisted and carried by God.

As for me, I cannot trust in anything but the power of his love and limitless mercy, because I can depend less and less on myself, since I feel nothing but weakness. The contradictions of the increasingly aggressive opponents contribute somewhat to this. [8] But I trust that everything will contribute to the greater triumph of truth, although in the meantime their insistence on defending a lost cause cannot help but disturb many poor religious who do not know which side to follow. They should pray very much that our Lord will send forth his light and soon restore peace. In the meantime, I am publishing my new book entitled *The True Traditional Mystical Life*, which is a collection of all the articles I have written on this question. I hope that it will shed some light on the matter, with the Lord's blessing.

The text you sent will be published very soon because there was some empty space in the next issue of the magazine. Tell Sister Pauline to take courage because God is knocking at the door. With this I must take leave because I am very occupied.

I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately yours,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
March 28, 1925

Dear Father:

This morning we received the papal blessing at the end of our retreat. Weighed down by the sweet burden of graces that the Lord's mercy has bestowed on me during these days, I gladly give you an account of how I spent them. I can say frankly that all went very well, leaving it to you to judge whether or not it really did. I was helped greatly by your letter, which I received the day before we entered retreat. I had already offered to the sweet Mother the little flower that if your letter did not arrive that day, I would leave it at her feet until the retreat ended. But this good and tender Mother was content with the good will of her poor daughter and by means of your letter she opened the door so I could enter the retreat and pass those days in the place where the Lord was waiting for me. Or, as you said: "Meanwhile be carried by that same love, in whatever way you experience it, whether joyful or suffering or with joyful suffering; and whether you have any strength or not, always go forward and be confident."

With your words in mind, I went to the first conference, in which the preacher told us that the purpose that Jesus proposed in coming to us during retreat was the same that he had proposed on coming to this earth; namely,

[8] Father Arintero refers to the Carmelites who were attacking his doctrine.

to seek sinners and that souls might have life. With these words of Jesus, united to your words, I felt that I had sufficient material for all the days of retreat. The Lord made me understand that what he wanted to give me during retreat was that more abundant life of which the preacher had spoken — the life of love which increases without end, because the way of love is eternal. So I did not occupy myself with anything else but loving and seeking more love. But in what a way he made me seek it! He placed me in a state of complete incapacity and impotence for everything, and at the same time gave me a very great sense of peace that caused me not to desire anything. I seemed to have everything and yet not to have or experience anything. I understood that this interior peace of soul proceeded from abandoning myself to love, for when love is master and works as it pleases, without being disturbed, it produces these sensations of peace and takes away all concern or solicitude for wanting to do anything, know anything or understand anything. Then the soul proceeds with confidence, supported by love. What a great grace this is, Father, that the Lord has given me. Yes, I cannot nor do I want to doubt that I have received this grace, which is for me a support of life and of love, not only for me but for others as well.

It seems easy and most natural for the soul to abondon itself completely to love, and so it should be. Nevertheless, as I understand it, such is not the case. How few souls there are that give Jesus the consolation of letting themselves be moved by his love. They fix their gaze on themselves, on their miseries; and they think that the flame of eternal love could not possibly consume them all. How many pure souls are afraid and have no courage, while I, a sinner and more wretched than anyone, fear nothing. Rather, I cast myself on love with even greater force as I see that I am more poor and wretched. I would like to make all these souls realize the peace I experience in doing this and see how love, simply because it is love, gives me a longing to go to heaven, to see God without seeing him, and to be able to do there what I cannot do here; namely, give light and generosity to souls so that they will turn from self and cast themselves on love without fear. This is what I have tried to do more than anything else during these days. On the third day I had to leave the solitude of my cell and break the total silence, which is our custom during retreat, in order to care for one of the postulants who was ill. There I finished the retreat with her. But there also, how many graces I received! How strongly I experienced the presence of hidden Love. I say hidden because I experienced it in the interior of my soul and very little in the senses, but I knew very well that it was he.

On Friday the presence of Love was even clearer. I felt united in a special way to the souls I love in God. This usually happens to me on that day. Is it because on that day God bathed us with his blood and united all of us in his heart? I think so, because on the vigil of that day Jesus presented himself to my mind in the bleeding condition of his Passion, and a sorrowing love drew me to him and kept me united to him in a special way. I seem to have him always before me and my spirit searches for loving souls to comtemplate with me the condition of the Beloved and to offer him their own heart pierced with sorrow at seeing that we were the cause of such cruelty.

I also invite you to accompany me in following Jesus in all these sorrowful scenes so that we can compassionate him in his sufferings and console him by our poor love. I feel that we must do something special during these hours of Jesus' suffering by offering him all our labors and sufferings. He who lets Friday pass like any other day, without doing anything special, makes Jesus weep with tears of paternal love at seeing himself abandoned, unknown and forgotten by the child he loves so much and for whom he suffers. Father, let us suffer with him! Oh, what suffering souls cause him! They also make me suffer. How many things I could tell you, Father, in this regard, but today your poor daughter can do nothing more than ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
April 1, 1925

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be always with you and you with him, especially in his solitude of the Garden and of Calvary, where he wants us so much to accompany him during these days and where so few souls want to be with him.

I rejoice that during your retreat he enabled you to experience that constant union which is superior to any sensible union, so that you might adore and love and praise "in spirit and in truth." As for me, I don't know how I am doing for I seem to be completely cold and arid. Nevertheless, I want to love him and to work only out of pure love and to offer him, especially on Fridays, some little grain of myrrh. Right now I bear within my breast an excellent grain of myrrh to offer him. It consists of an "open letter" that was widely distributed, in which, with the appearance of sincerity, my articles are branded as "pure falsehood." Since those articles are about to be reprinted in my new book *The True Traditional Mystical Life*, though somewhat edited, the Provincial has *ordered* me to respond clearly by means of a few footnotes that will state the truth clearly.

Since I am so busy today, I must close this letter. Pray that God will give me light and tact as well as peace and good humor, so that I can answer calmly in defense of the truth without hurting charity.

I bless you and commend myself to you.

Affectionately yours in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
April 6, 1925

Dear Father:

May the sorrows of Jesus and Mary be ever engraved on our hearts and strengthen our union with them, especially during this week in which the torrent of divine grace flows more abundantly in order to blot out iniquities and sanctify souls.

Let us run, let us run without fear, Father, to cast ourselves into this fountain, whatever the state of our souls. For us and for all, the wounds of Love have released the river of divine Blood as a motivation for souls in their effort to love him who so loved us. I know well, Father, that this is not as easy to do as to say, if one does not have his eyes fixed on Jesus, our divine Model. But gazing on him, not only is it made easy, but it impels us to love with predilection and special tenderness those who help us.

With great fervor I have asked the Lord to keep your heart in his divine hands and enable you to work according to his will, giving you the sweetness of his charity and his tenderness as a Father — the only way to attract souls to his love. And if we do not seek this and do not attain it, what is the purpose of our doing anything? Nothing but to weary ourselves and waste time.

Do not be preoccupied, Father, about the harm that may result from those publications. If we love, love has even greater power. Remember that the others also, all of them, have the same good intentions as you do: to do their duty to seek the truth, to defend the glory of their Order. Do not think otherwise, Father, and you will see how in time the truth will be revealed, not only without injury to charity, but even with an increase of charity and for the sanctification of all. This is the end which God intends: to make all of us saints in order to keep us all united in his heart for all eternity.

How strong are the bonds of the love of God! How intensely I feel my love for all souls and how I would like to fuse them all and refashion them into one — God! Sometimes it seems that my heart will overflow. It is because I love with the heart of Jesus, and his heart overflows with love for us at every instant.

I have just read your last article in *Ciencia Tomista* and also the article by

Father Sabino. [9] What wisdom and study those articles reflect. When I read them, I said: "Lord, grant that these Fathers may have as much love in their hearts as they have knowledge in their heads. Then undoubtedly they will become saints and doctors." But I do not envy you. Sometimes, in order to have a heart that is bigger, more generous and constant, I wish I were a man. But in order not to have to seek for reasons and break my head analyzing words and ideas and making distinctions as they do, I would rather be a woman. Then, without so much reasoning, I blindly cast myself on love and there I find everything. Poor Fathers, I feel sorry for them, because in seeking truth and love, they cannot find peace in either the one or the other.

When I read, my head gets weary, so I close the book and my eyes and then I understand a world of things without getting tired. Sometimes books bore me with all their complexity and analysis of things that in themselves are really simple. Therefore I pity anyone who has to engage in this work. But do not become discouraged, Father, for you will find joy in heaven. God is just and you are working for him.

Thank you for the leaflets on Merciful Love. I would be grateful if you would send me two more so that I shall have one for each of my novices. We recite the ejaculations in the novitiate each hour.

Once again, Happy Easter and I ask your special blessing.

Your affectionate daughter in the Lord,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
April 15, 1925

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he grant you a share in the graces and glory of his holy Resurrection, by which he communicates new life.

I am grateful for your letters. They help me bear my little grains of myrrh. Thanks to you, I was able to make my reply as gentle as possible, and now I am completely at peace. Before that, I did not know what to do nor could I think of a satisfactory solution. Now I think I can rest content because everything was done with prudence and calmness.

I received a letter from a Carmelite Father in Rome who regrets the opposition of those Carmelites and hopes that soon there will be better relations between the two Orders. He said that in his Order they have not decided this question, so that some have one opinion and others think differently. Therefore he is planning to write some articles in which he will try to unite the two factions. Blessed be God for everything.

I am going to write to that good Father to thank him for his kindness and encourage him in his intention, and I trust that soon everything will be settled.

Hoping to see you around May 4 or earlier, I must now end this letter because I am very busy.

I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
April 28, 1925

Dear Father:

The first hours of Holy Saturday were very consoling to me, undoubtedly because Saturday is the day consecrated to Mary and on that day I always expect and receive particular graces. The night of Good Friday, the Prioress told us that since Matins for Saturday had already been chanted and we would not have to rise during the night, all of us should make up for the sleep we lost

[9] Mother Magdalen refers to Father Sabino Lozano, O.P., who became her director after the death of Father Arintero.

the night before, when we kept vigil with Jesus in the tomb. I felt a little disappointed and said silently: "My dear and sweet mother, you are all alone, weeping with sorrow at the death of Jesus, while I spend the night in bed. How willingly I would rise in the middle of the night to console you somewhat."

The sacristain said to the Prioress: "Mother, may I rise in the middle of the night to go to chapel and see if the lamp is burning?" Immediately I asked: "And may I get up to visit the sick?" Having received permission, I was able to get up while the others slept and everything was silent. After visiting the sick nun, I knelt in the corridor in order not to make any noise and spent a long time consoling the Blessed Virgin. How keenly I felt her presence, and with what sweetness she made me experience her sorrow and sadness. And Father, do you know what I did to console her? I renewed with all my heart the vow of love for Jesus and for her. I said: "My Mother, Jesus died in order to be loved. You surrendered him to death so that man would see your love and would love you. Be consoled, my Mother; Jesus and you have obtained what you sought — love. I promise you to love you always with all my heart and to make others love you. Jesus has conquered; his love has triumphed over my poor heart. I love him and I wish to love him also for those who do not love him." Then my mind saw a splendid preview of the glorious and eternal triumph of love. My heart leaped with joy.

But now I must tell you about the consoling hours that I spoke of at the beginning of my letter — the early hours of Saturday — and what love taught me during the day. I wanted to go to confession and it seemed fitting to do so in order to prepare for Communion on Easter Sunday. But when I asked permission, the Prioress said that all the nuns wanted to go to confession, but the confessor had said that it would be difficult for him to come because he had many confessions and therefore it would be better if we waited. We had all gone to confession on Wednesday, but those other people confessed scarcely once a year. I suffered at having to be without confession for Easter Sunday. I seemed unable to resign myself and I complained somewhat to the Lord. Then I felt interiorly as if he were saying to me: "Make your confession to Love. Love is a confessor that is always at your disposal, to which you can confess at any time, certain that you will do it well and with much profit."

At the same time I was enlightened regarding the role of love in purifying our souls when we cannot go to confession. I realized how few souls make use of it, to the sorrow of the God of goodness and infinite mercy who has given it to us. I also remembered his words to Magdalen: *"Dimissa sunt ei peccata multa quia dilexit multum."* [10]

Asking your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
May 18, 1925

Dear Father:

When the Lord grants me a grace, I immediately want to tell it to you so that you may also rejoice and bless God with me. Although sometimes I fear that this is not always necessary.

This is how I spent the days before Easter: A novice, who has been sick for a month, got worse during Holy Week and the thought came to me that the Lord did this so that I would tend the sick novice and see her as Jesus, wounded and dying for love of us. I have such a lively faith that Jesus is in the sick that I think that even if he had not said that he is in them, I would have guessed it. I was even happy with the thought that I would have someone sick, because the joy I find in serving them.

On Thursday and Good Friday I spent most of the time with the sick

[10] "Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much."

novice. At times she had a very high temperature, and I told her that during these days the temperature of Jesus was even higher, because it produced his death. Encouraged by my words, she remained peaceful and content and even expressed a desire to suffer more. I rejoiced in the Lord at seeing how a young girl, who only a few months ago was in the midst of the vanities of the world and had little knowledge of spiritual matters, could reach this degree of perfection in such a short time. Docile in everything, patient, abandoned to the will of God, she enjoyed the enviable peace and tranquillity which are the fruits of abandonment. When the soul has begun to experience this peace, it is happy. It has entered upon a way from which it would be difficult to turn back. Rather, everything impels it to hope that soon it will be enveloped by the flames of divine love that will make it a happy prisoner forever.

Father, I learn from these examples. Close to the sick novice, the Lord speaks to me interiorly and teaches me the holiness contained in abandonment to his divine hands and how in him is found the happiness of souls and all good. But the abandonment that he teaches me and asks of me is a very interior, intimate and spiritual abandonment; and I do not know if I have words to describe it. It is an abandonment that makes the soul become rooted in God, live in him, love him and believe in his love, but without understanding how all this happens, yet peaceful and certain that my soul lives in God. Thus, the soul remains completely under the power of love, which does everything, without the soul being aware of it or knowing where it will all end. But that does not matter, and the soul does not try to understand. It asks for love and waits. It does not know if love will be given to it, but it believes and waits and is happy, because it does not desire or ask for anything else. Love alone suffices.

It would seem that there is no certitude here, but only doubt and uncertainty; but that is not so. When I abandon myself to God in this way, Father, how secure I am, though I cannot say whence it comes or what is its basis. Perhaps you will tell me if you can. It seems that nobody knows how to define these things very well or to speak about them. Therefore I think that no one could ever give the soul the certitude that it has; consequently, it can only come from God.

I think that even spiritual directors, however learned and holy, cannot do this. They can console, they can help, but they could never give this certitude to the soul. Much less could they enable the soul to remain at peace in this state, without any fears.

This is the abandonment that the Lord is asking of me now. It is an abandonment far superior to the other of which I spoke to you at the beginning, because it demands greater faith, more generosity and more strength, but it also contains much more love. How intensely those souls love who love in this way! This is the true love of God — to love God in a divine manner, with pure love which seems to be identical with the love with which he loved us.

Thus, Father, when you tell me that you experience coldness and aridity and that you do not know whether you love or how you love, because it seems to you that you do not love at all, but only desire to love, hope and believe in love, I am very happy, because that is the clearest sign — especially if the soul is tranquil and at peace — that it already possesses this true love of perfect abandonment. For we blindly abandon what means the most to us and is most precious to us — our soul — to a God who is not seen or felt or known, but in whom one believes and hopes and sleeps the sweet sleep of love because the soul has found the place of its rest.

This is not yet the perfect rest of heaven because that is in eternity and we are still in time. Nevertheless, this rest in love is most similar to that of the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem and they alone are more happy and blessed.

Father, when shall we see each other there? On this earth, although we have found and have been given the best that there is, it is still too little for a soul that needs the eternity of God. Eternal rest in his eternal love! Let us rest

peacefully, Father, in this precious supernatural abondonment, and if you see that one day I begin to awaken to the noise of nature or my passions then, like a vigilant sentinel, advise me at once. Tell me that the enemy is near so that I may immediately invoke the Beloved, and the enemy will flee without waking me and I shall continue my peaceful rest, awaiting the eternal rest in eternal love. I shall do the same for you, because this is what true love demands and what God wishes — that each one care for the good of the other as his own.

Father, in this peaceful rest of which I am speaking my soul sleeps to the sound of the voice of the Lord:

Listen without awaking, beloved soul,
To the sweet lullaby with which God puts you to sleep.
Open your eyes only to look at me,
And then go back to sleep.

Let not the memory of the past return
To interrupt your restful sleep.
Your divine Master knows all;
Sleep without fear.

Do not think of the life that awaits you;
I have already marked out your steps.
Sleep, I repeat, in my loving arms;
Never doubt my love.

As you see, Father, my words differ little from the other times when I spoke to you about this abandonment. But although I expressed myself in the same way, how different it is each time the Lord works in the soul and makes it understand these things. In God everything is new at every moment. All the acts of the Lord are new marvels of his infinite greatness and power. That is the way my soul understands it. Every movement by which he attracts the soul to himself is new; new also is every degree of love, of light or virtue that he communicates to the soul; new is his beauty and new are all his infinite attributes. I understand that he is new for us because in himself he possesses everything and will possess everything for all eternity.

That same love with which he loves us and is now manifesting to us, he has always had. It is eternal, and he has always loved us this way, the same way that he loves us now. He cannot love us in any other way. What depth of meaning is here!

Therefore, when one speaks of God or his operations in the soul, there is so much to say. The subject never ends. And when I try to speak of it, so many things occur to me (in spite of my dullness and ignorance) that it seems that I shall never finish.

At every moment I experience new things from God. Everything surprises me. I would like, Father, to tell you about them, but it is not possible; there is not enough time; it would take an eternity.

Let this be the final word of my letter: let us love God very much. May his love alone fill our souls. Asking your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
June 11, 1925

Dear Father:

Some of the nuns were ill, though thanks be to God have recovered, and since I was kept busy as infirmarian, I was unable to write until now, in spite of my great desire to do so. And what a day it is that I begin to write to you — the feast of Corpus Christi, which is so deeply rooted in my life.

You will remember from my early letters the favors that Jesus granted me on this day through the Sacred Host to the then Giuseppina at the age of

17 [11] She does not forget them nor can she ever forget them; and every time this feast comes around, her remembrance is intensified in a special way, with a heart full of gratitude to him who deigned to take me as his own. In spite of my great ingratitude, he has never ceased to love me with the most tender love of a Bridegroom. And in consideration for this favor of the Lord, I took the religious name that I have — Jesus in the Eucharist. Yes, I must be of Jesus in the Eucharist, since he took me for his own so that like him and with him I could be continually immolated for love.

Love has been and is the "scourge" of Jesus and it must be the same with his poor bride. With what ardor I loved Jesus when I was 17, although I must say that I did so almost without knowing him. Now I do not know if I love him; I am afraid that I do not love him as I did then; but I believe that I know him better and am more intimately united with him with bonds that are not held in the weak hands of Magdalen but in his own divine hands. Sometimes I notice that these bonds are so tight that I don't know how the body can resist; for I see myself so evil, full of defects and imperfections. And I seem to hear interiorly: "I want you to live with my divine life, to speak with my mouth, to work with my hands, to think with my mind, to love with my heart." But I do not know how to do anything. I only desire to do great things, to love Love and to make him loved. I feel in my soul a hidden secret power for leading everyone to God so that all may become one with him. Sometimes this seems so easy, almost as if I were the mistress of all souls and were able to offer all of them to the Lord. But afterwards, I find so few united with him.

Father, why don't we find some way to attract all souls to this Supreme Good? They make so many inventions and discover so many things. Why, then, do we not discover a way to make souls love God? Let us see if we can find something.

Sometimes I remember the words of Jesus: *"Cum exaltatus fuero a terra omnia traham ad me ipsum,"* [12] and I seem to hear in my soul: "To attract hearts to God, it is necessary to raise them above the earth. The earth is material, and material attracts material things. God is spirit, and the more one is elevated and detached from the material, the better disposed he is to attract souls to God." Then I experience a desire to die in order to detach myself from the body, but I understand that there is also another way, and it is in my hands right now — to nail my body to the cross by mortification and sacrifice. In this way we can, like Jesus, be always lifted up from the earth and be suitable instruments for attracting souls to his love.

Sacrifice accomplishes so much and it is so necessary in order to achieve this end. Every day, Father, I understand it better. When one sacrifices himself secretly and generously for the good of a soul, it is impossible that he will not draw that soul to God. So I resign myself to live in order to sacrifice myself for souls with a smile on my lips. I feel that God wants to use me to win many souls to his love, to make them understand that love which must captivate them, in spite of their repugnance and resistance.

Just this morning one of the nuns asked to speak to me about a spiritual matter and this caused me confusion and embarrassment at having to deal with a good and instructed religious. Perhaps some of my repugnance is due to the fact that when they speak to me confidentially, there always escapes from me some word about what the Lord does to me, and then I am sorry. I would prefer that everything remain hidden. These were my sentiments during prayer, and I was thinking that after Mass I would have to go to speak with that nun because I had promised. Then I heard interiorly: "In vain do you try to hide. The works of my love must be manifested. Sometimes I hide the works of my justice, but those of my mercy must be made known." This also encouraged me to continue writing what you asked for on the vow of

[11] This was Mother Magdalen's name in the world.

[12] "When I am raised up from the earth, I shall draw all things to myself."

love. The thought that something can be of help in making God loved and may continue to do good for souls even after my death, gives me strength for everything.

I am going to relate a case to you so that you can give me your opinion. Some time ago a religious wrote to me to tell me that she found herself on a veritable Calvary, full of suffering, although she did not describe anything in particular. But from some of her expressions I concluded that they were not sufferings that proceed from the love of God or that sanctify the soul, but from self-love and unmortified passion. In order to be more certain, I wrote and asked her if in the midst of her sufferings she retained peace and freedom of spirit to direct herself to God in prayer with frequent aspirations. She answered that as regards peace of soul, she had been deprived of it for some time and, as a natural consequence, of freedom of spirit.

My reply to this soul, if I must tell her what I think, will be to show her the true cause of her great sufferings, and how she can and ought to remedy them and prevent them, because they are sufferings that do not sanctify. Rather, they impede sanctity because of their effects, which are so different from those produced by the sufferings that God sends in order to purify souls and unite them with himself. I would try to tell her this with all possible gentleness and I think she would be convinced, but I cannot bring myself to do it. It seems that in calling me to work for souls, God has entrusted to me only his goodness, mercy and love; the part he entrusted to Mary. And so, when anything involves repression, I am afraid, because I think that is not for me. At the same time, I want to do good for souls; and for the one of whom I speak, I see no other way than to make her see the truth. Please tell me what to do.

To you also, as to his poor daughter, God has entrusted his goodness and his love. This, therefore, is the way we can achieve something. If we depart from this circle which the Lord has designated as our work, we shall achieve little or nothing. Whatever is harsh, severe or oppressive must be left to someone else, for this is not our field. Ours is the area where goodness and love for everybody always predominates. In this way we shall win more souls than with all sorts of arguments. Love has more power than truth itself or reason.

See, Father, whether by this means you will conquer your opponents. What will they do? Will they be silent or will they continue in that tone? In heaven you shall all sing the same eternal canticle of love. Thinking this way arouses sentiments of most tender brotherhood for everyone. I find no greater consolation in this exile nor anything more similar to the sentiments of the fatherland that awaits us. Love everyone and try to do good to everyone.

Father, if you could see how the Lord is depriving me of sensible consolations, or rather, giving them to me in another way. For example, speaking with you gives me contentment; but it is like something outside of me, far away, very distant from me, like a drink of water that refreshes me for a few instants and then leaves me thirsty again. But this does not afflict me. On the contrary, it keeps me hidden and recollected in the center of my soul, where I find that which replaces all exterior consolations and — though I cannot say in what way — satisfies all my aspirations.

And now, in closing, a word about Sister Pauline. She has come to consult with me about her inspiration to offer herself as a victim to Love like the Little Flower. I have advised her to write to you. Her night is now approaching the dawn, and when love enters, there will no longer be any need for the night to purify her. Her martyrdoms are gradually being changed into pure and intimate joys which bind her ever more with the divine Lover.

How beautiful are the ways of God. Blessed is he who perseveres until he reaches the summit. We, Father, wish to be of this fortunate number and to that end let us repeat frequently: to die or to go forward.

Respectful greetings from the Prioress and your affectionate daughter. I beg your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
January 25, 1925

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he always be the magnet that attracts you as he did the former Giuseppina. It is well to recall that grace which is the origin of so many others.

Thus carried by Love, he will teach you what is best in each instance. Regarding the sufferings of that poor soul, which do not come from the pure love of God but from the contrary, holy zeal should prompt you to speak the pure saving truth, however much it pains you. If you see that it is necessary to do so, do not be held back by human feelings but simply avoid failing in charity and try to act in such a way that she will see clearly that you are seeking only her good.

Yes, my daughter, I see that our Lord gives to both of us more attraction to the works of Love and we should prefer to dedicate ourselves to that. It would be difficult for us to use any other method. But sometimes there is no other remedy, and charity itself urges and obliges. . .

I do not know if I am trying to excuse myself for some excessive severity in my notes against that famous open letter. The first copies of my book have just arrived. God grant that it will do good for souls and make a good impression. I was not able to be more gentle in view of the harm the others are causing, so that some friends have considered it absolutely necessary that Father Ignatius [13] write a serious refutation in order to eliminate all opposition. You will tell me with complete frankness what you think of the severity I was unable to avoid. But it seems that this is not our role. Father Ignatius has done very well (except that he favors me a great deal without my meriting it) and there is also a refutation in my notes. For the next edition I plan to eliminate all the harshness that you and other good persons will indicate to me and in that way the book will be more edifying.

Now I see more and more how fitting it is that we should sacrifice ourselves and always wear a smile on our lips. For your part, follow the interior impulse which moves you to pour on all souls the divine balsam and to do what you can to promulgate the works of love. I am also happy to see that you are being deprived of sensible consolations in order to receive others more intimate and lasting.

Without time for more, I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
July 16, 1925

Dear Father:

Many thanks for the three books and the leaflets on the Association and especially the one on St. Therese, which will serve very well for the novitiate. Also thanks for your book, *The True Mystical Life*, which I am reading with pleasure, since I read everything that you and those who think like you teach. Finally, thank you for the three little works of Father Ignatius, beautifully written, in which one can see his profound knowledge of the things of God. I have prayed for him so that his soul will be enveloped more and more in the flame of divine love and that his knowledge will produce good effects. I cannot tell you what impressions the doctrine of both of you leaves on my heart. Everything my heart desires is found there — light, truth and love. If everyone felt what I feel, then all the arguments would be ended. They do not feel this way because they do not open themselves to this light of truth pulsating with love. And God, who in all this, is saddened because they reject him by wanting to limit his greatness by their weak human mind, which is often obscured by the clouds of emotion.

[13] Father Ignatius Menendez-Reigada, O.P., professor at St. Stephen's in Salamanca and renowned preacher and author.

For your consolation, I renew my vow of love and I ask God to enable me to help souls open themselves to the truth. The Lord makes me forget that I am poor, little and ignorant, and he seems to say to me: "One who loves can do all things. Increase your desires as much as you wish, for a soul will never desire so much that I cannot or will not grant even more." And I ask him . . . (Father, if you only knew the number of things . . . and to what point the desires of your poor daughter extend!) I ask him that all my acts and words be love and that they echo in all souls capable of loving, even to the end of the world. And when I write, I ask that my words should be so many coals of fire that enkindle and increase love in everyone. As long as there exists a heart capable of growing in divine love, I ask that when I die, my ashes and my bones will attract souls to his love so that all may know God and grow in his love.

But what is all this? It is nothing, because it belongs to a finite creature, and God is infinite and therefore worthy of infinite love. Then I said: "All these acts that I want to continue doing good until the end of the world, those ashes and my bones, let them not be those of the sinner Magdalen, but those of Jesus." Every day I nourish myself on his flesh in virtue of the words that he spoke: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him." This transformation has been realized. No, I am not deceived; I feel that it is so. Jesus unites to himself the poor creature, he makes her great with his greatness, and that is why he drew her out of nothingness and redeemed her with his Blood. I believe in this love of his, and to one who believes, it will be granted in accordance with his faith.

It seems to me, Father, that I see both of us working after our death. Oh how many flaming coals my spiritual Father will leave behind him! Then we shall scatter them together and there will be no more adversaries, because this same fire will be enkindled in everyone. Then, seeing myself as the mother of souls, I shall call out to them with all my strength. Jesus authorizes me to do this. He tells me that to those who believe in his love everything is permitted. He gives them the honor of virginity together with the joys and the rights of motherhood, as he did to his most Holy Mother. As to her, he permits these souls, to form Christ in souls by the ardor of charity until the end of the world. And I, Father, feel that I love equally my virginity and my maternity, because both the one and the other are equally the fruit of love.

Father, give to your poor daughter your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist
Dominican Passionist

Salamanca
July 19, 1925

Dear daughter in Jesus:

May he inflame your soul more and more with the fire of his holy love and enable you to enkindle it in all the souls with whom you communicate, especially in this poor heart of mine so that in life and in death I may work to make the whole world know the mysteries of Merciful Love and make all souls open themselves to it. I am greatly consoled and pleased with the courage the Lord gives you to forget yourself and, clothed in his strength, to dare to cry out to all, and especially to me, so that we will give ourselves truly to love.

As regards myself, you will have to correct me severely when, in reading my book you come to the footnote against the famous open letter. It was impossible for me to conceal my anger at their lack of sincerity and the harm that could have been done. If I had only known then that Father Ignatius would answer the argument so well! Then I could have ignored that letter and concentrated simply on the answer, and the book would have gained much without those harsh footnotes which are so unbecoming. Yet, they serve to humble me and at another time I shall be more careful. I am thinking of surpressing them completely when a new edition is printed because they

are no longer necessary, although unless God opens their eyes, I fear that they will continue in the same way. But some good persons tell me that since the truth has been stated clearly, we would do better to be silent and let God defend his cause. And this is what I plan to do.

I like very much your signature — Dominican Passionist. This authorizes you to correct me whenever it is necessary and especially when you read those footnotes. Of course, our Provincial commanded me to write them, and therefore, I did it in obedience.

Pray that the retreat which I begin today for the Poor Clares will produce much fruit. I bless you all and commend myself to your prayers. I wish you much happiness and many blessings on your feast day, with all the torrents of love of the saintly penitent.

Affectionately yours in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

15.
DIVINE LIFE

Deusto
August 13, 1925

Dear Father:

Before discussing the matters of my soul, may God reward you for your beautiful greeting to his daughter Magdalen, and may he accomplish in me that delicacy of love which you desire for me. May the seraphim that wounded St. Teresa likewise wound my heart, [1] although from what I feel, it is either foolish or it must be wounded in some way.

How happy I am to see how eagerly the nuns await *La Vida Sobrenatural* and read it again and again with love and profit. Long live Jesus, who thus diffuses his aroma to attract souls to his love. I also, as a bride united to her bridegroom, want to diffuse that perfume, and I shall do it especially when I am in heaven. The mission the Lord gives me is the same as that of the magazine — to help souls run after the Beloved and to make them a sanctuary in which he dwells and finds rest for his exhausted love. This is my mission, and I know it more clearly every day. The love of Jesus is weary from seeking man, weary of so much ingratitude. I want to give him souls that will love him with fervor so that he can rest in them; and once inflamed with his fire, they will go through the world in search of the lost sheep so that all may come to the feet of the Good Shepherd.

On earth and in heaven I must always be Magdalen, that is, I must love. I must sit at the feet of the Master and gaze at him. Jesus does not ask anything else of me. There, at his feet, his divine gaze seems to say to me as to the first Magdalen: "Wherever my gospel is preached, they will say also what love can do and what love has done for you." I would prefer not to see anything, to close my eyes on the future, but I cannot do it; it is not in my power. And I even think that the Lord wants it this way so love will be extended; for love is great only when it embraces all times and is lost in eternity.

But I see that as yet I have told you nothing that I intended when I began this letter. When I enter the regions of love, a superhuman power takes hold of me, and there are so many things that I understand and feel that I cannot pass on to other things without violence or depart from that plane of love where the Lord has established the dwelling of his poor spouse whom he wants to have with him always. In this state of soul, Father, I read your footnotes in *The True Mystical Life,* which you had described as being somewhat harsh and detracting somewhat from the book.

Harshness against harshness always produces a noise; and noise does no good whatever, except that sometimes it is useful to wake up those who are sleeping. But the footnotes do not seem harsh to me, and they certainly will not appear so to anyone who has read the statements of the opposition. I find them very moderate and gentle, although they do indicate something of the spontaneity with which you wrote them, confronted by the fact that you judged that your opponents were moved by passion or tried to discredit your writings. But you should not think this, Father. Everyone has a good intention in whatever he does, except sin, and who knows whether actions which are defective in human eyes may not be good in the eyes of the Lord, who judges in a very different manner? Sometimes he purposely withdraws or denies his light and permits errors and mistakes so that by means of discussion the truth will appear more clearly and forcefully so that no one can deny it. And then, deprived of the light of the Lord, one makes mistakes, but with a good intention, because it is certain that *"sine tuo lumine nihil est in homine."* [2]

If one thinks this way, he does not make a mistake or endanger charity, and

[1] During one of her ecstatic raptures, an angel with a lance pierced the heart of St. Teresa of Avila.

[2] "Without thy light there is nothing in man."

he hastens the hour when the divine light can again shine forth, that light which should enlighten us all and lead to the beautiful region of love, where you, Father, already are, and I hope your poor daughter will be also. Consequently, I dare to speak to you with utmost confidence. I am afraid that the devil suggests some of those thoughts to you, and if they are not rejected promptly, they will be an obstacle to love, which is the only thing that we are obliged to preserve in all things. It does not suffice, Father, to say that this word or that phrase is from St. Paul or St. Peter. My spiritual Father is neither Peter nor Paul; he is John, and St. John is the Apostle of Love. And that is what the Lord wants you to be — an apostle of his love. Leave severity to others. And pardon me, Father, pardon me, though I know well that you cannot scold me or take offense at what I say, because a father cannot reprimand his child when she does what the father commands.

Returning to love, which is a constant pulsation of my soul, I feel a need for eternal things. Things that pass are all very small and do not deserve the least esteem. I feel in myself the grandeur of the infinite; and hence, everything outside of God seems small. Listening one day to a conversation on death, and feeling in myself the fullness of life that the Lord came to bring us from heaven, I almost cried out: "What death? Death does not exist! He who loves God will never die; he will live forever." And how can one think otherwise who feels in himself the fountain of eternal light and knows that in order to give us this life without end, the Author himself of life died on a cross?

A few days later I read, much to my consolation, that God himself, through the mouth of the prophet Osee, promised that he would free us from death: *"De manu mortis liberabo eos."* [3] Therefore, one can say that death does not exist because it has been destroyed by our divine Savior. What a blessing, Father, what a blessing! Let us always love God. Our death, if we want to call it such, is nothing more than the beginning of the fullness of life. When will that moment come? I desire it very much but I desire and yearn more for something else. Consequently, I experience in my soul a double thirst: a thirst for God, to lose myself in him forever, to be consumed in his love without thinking about living, and a thirst for souls as a part of God, which they are.

God and souls; this is the double thirst that makes my heart suffer a continual martyrdom. It seems to me that both for the One and for the other I am ready for any sacrifice, for total immolation, to die, to live, to be annihilated. I feel an interior force as something independent of myself and it impels me to look always for the means of doing good for souls, and I think that if I were to continue feeling this way, I could not rest even in heaven. St. Therese must have experienced this thirst when she said that she would not rest in heaven until the end of the world. I see that this is very natural in one who loves. Love does not rest, so how can the lover rest?

But in heaven one cannot suffer. It will be a joyful suffering which is changed or transformed into a greater joy when the lot of all souls has been decided definitively for all eternity. Does it not seem to you, Father, that to look from heaven on souls in danger must produce effects very different when the danger has passed? I call that special type of rejoicing — there in heaven — a martyrdom of love, which does not let us rest even in the mansion of the blessed. And how strongly the sweet Mother, holy Mary, must experience it.

You say, Father, that you like my signature as a Dominican Passionist. Perhaps I should not dare because when our humble institute was founded, your holy Order had already existed for centuries with great glory. And now your poor daughter shares in that also.

Begging your blessing,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist
Dominican Passionist

[3] "From the hand of death, deliver us."

Salamanca
August 23, 1925

Dearest daughter in "sweet Jesus, Jesus love":

May he wound you more and more with those divine arrows which make you detach yourself from self and inflame you more and more with desires for him and for gaining souls.

It consoles me greatly to see that God gives you the same mission as that of our magazine. Contrary to human prudence, he is able very simply to enable you to begin to realize it. Thus, he undoubtedly moved me to command you to do what I commanded; namely, to write articles and even to use the signature that you use, so that you could bear the name of "Jesus Pastor."

I thank you sincerely for your gentle criticism. I was afraid it would be more severe, or that what I had written would have seemed much harsher to you. But now, there is no remedy, and it is just as well that all should see how great is my self-love. Nevertheless, it is consoling to think that the noise of "harshness against harshness" seems to have awakened many and has aroused interest in these questions. Also, the opposition is beginning to see the bad ground on which they stand and it is to be hoped they will cease their attack. For my part, I already told you that I plan to omit that section completely in the next edition and simply expound the truth.

Without time for anything more, I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
September 5, 1925

Dear Father:

I received your letter, filled with goodness, as they all are — a reflection of the divine goodness toward me, in spite of the fact that I am very evil. Last week, with the excuse that it would be good for my health, I indulged myself somewhat. Immediately the divine glance was fixed on me with severity, making me realize my lack of mortification and ingratitude; and it continues as I write. How great, Oh Lord, is your goodness! I deserve to be abandoned by you, rejected forever; but instead, you are with me, making me understand that your gaze, although severe, is my help and my salvation. How good God is and how evil I am!

When the divine goodness hides my wickedness from me, I fear nothing; I seek nothing and I do not ask to die, although I suffer for other reasons. But when he reveals my ingratitude, my vileness, misery and sin, and makes me feel all this, I tremble, I fear and I beg to die, because I know that nobody can be secure in the midst of such evil. I have recourse to Love, and he revives the memory of my promises. Yes, Jesus, I shall always believe in your love.

But how different my soul feels when love smiles than when love is severe. I have gone to confession several times and I want to go again; I never cease to repeat to Jesus that I love him and that I would rather die than offend him or sadden him any more.

Yesterday this letter was interrupted, so I continue today, a little while after Holy Communion. Yes, Father, I have just received Jesus. I have held him close to my heart, ungrateful as I am, but with confidence in his limitless love. I told him that I am willing that the whole world should know me and call me ungrateful and a sinner. But I do not wish and I shall never consent that anyone should say that my wickedness makes me fail in trust in my God or that I have doubted his goodness to me for a single instant, after so many proofs of love. I have told you that in heaven, when I shall sing his mercies *in aeternun*, [4] I shall proclaim all my wickedness so that those who dwell in that kingdom can repeat in chorus: "The mercies of God are without number,

[4] Forever.

quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius." [5]

How many things I shall have to say then. It seems that I would need an eternity just to say what pertains to me, everything that I wish to say. But eternity, what is it? It is God, and therefore I need God, and with him, I need nothing else. He himself is his eternal praise and for that only eternity suffices.

I do not know if you understand what I mean. At least understand, Father, my need for the grace of the Lord and send me occasionally your holy blessing as a pledge of love of Jesus whom I fear I have offended. And if my Mother, whose day is today (Saturday), sends me the confessor, I shall confess; if not, I propose from this moment to make greater acts of love, to give more kisses to my crucifix and to remain at peace. Meanwhile, in one way or another, hidden or open, love continues to work in me. How I experience it!

The Prioress asked me to tell you that if you have any little books with articles by J. Pastor, she would like to have one for each religious, because they do much good for all of them. If she only knew where they came from! She also said that it is enough for her to know that a book is written by a woman in order not to like it!

Humbly begging your blessing, Father,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, O.P.

Salamanca
September 14, 1925

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be your consolation and, after making you realize your own nothingness, may he make you realize what he is and wishes to be in you. I presume that you have experienced this already, because trusting in his love, he will not delay in manifesting it clearly.

You are right in trying to receive absolution whenever it is convenient in such cases, but do not bother the confessor by calling him only for that. If he is not available and God does not send him, be content with the purification that is at hand — holy water, sorrow and love.

As for me, how could I be angry with you because you tell me the truth, especially when I asked you to do it? On the contrary, that was one of the letters that pleased me most, and our Lord must have been helped by it, and others like it, to make me resolve not to pursue those disagreeable arguments once the truth has been stated clearly.

Pray that I gain much fruit from the retreat which we are beginning today. Then, on September 25, I must go to Madrid to preach for fifteen days.

With my blessing and commending myself to your prayers,

Affectionately yours in Christ,
Father John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
October 12, 1925

Dear Father:

Before discussing my own soul, I must say something about another, but very briefly, because I know the amount of work you must have after your long absence.

This other soul is Sister Pauline. You already know what an angel she is, but the Lord is not content; he asks even greater perfection of her. I have understood this for some time now, but delayed in saying anything until I could be sure, because what God does not ask, we should not demand. The Lord does want her to be more perfect, as you will see from the enclosed letter. Bless her, Father.

In regard to my soul and the apostolate to which it is drawn, I know that without sacrifice it is impossible to do anything — much less to lead souls to God. But I feel ready for anything, by the strength and grace of him who lives in me and sustains me with his sweet love when the body feels slothful and

[5] "For his mercy endureth forever."

little disposed for sacrifice and work.

And so it happened in the days when I was waiting for your previous letter. You will remember, Father, that I was very much humbled and confounded because of my infidelities. It was a Friday, the day on which the Lord ordinarily makes me experience a special interior call to union with him. I went to choir, because our rule states that we should not work on Friday mornings, but dedicate it to prayer. During this period of recollection I felt very strongly the presence of God in the interior of my soul. There seemed to be diffused in it and in my whole being something indescribably divine, something infinitely sweet and gentle, that took me out of myself and made me feel as if I was far away from the place in which I actually was. It seemed that the Lord was giving me something for souls and uniting me to him in order to work for them. My joy was so great that big tears fell from my eyes. It was as if a hand was holding a dripping cloth to my face, though I don't know how to describe the liquid that made my face wet.

It seemed to me, Father, that it was a very great grace from the Lord, because it left me so ready for sacrifice that I wanted it. During those days the Prioress refused me some things, but it cost me nothing to submit. For several days I felt the presence of the Lord even more strongly and with much sweetness. And now I feel more capable and more eager to make God loved and make his love known. And if they say that I speak of things that are not proper for an ignorant woman, I shall say that we are all ignorant before God and nobody knows how to speak except him whom God enables to speak. But no, I shall not say anything, for it is better to be silent. I only say this to you, but with others I am silent and I let love be my master and dispose of me and of mine with absolute dominion, since God sometimes seems to make me mistress of his affairs.

If you only knew, Father, in how many ways the Lord shows his particular love for me. I shall not begin to tell you because I would never finish. But I shall tell about them in heaven, for I need an eternity in order to say all that I know of the Lord. St. Paul says that in the day of the Lord the works of each one will be revealed by fire. I think, Father, that there must be two kinds of fire: one enkindled by the wrath of God to reveal all evil works, and the other enkindled by his infinite goodness and mercy to reveal all the works of his love. I hope that my works will be revealed in the light of this second fire. But for now I prefer to be silent and to love, disposing myself to be able to receive that light which my entire being will radiate for the eternal glory of love.

We are reading *The True Traditional Mystical Life* in refectory. All the nuns like it very much and say that it ought to be read in every religious community because it is so instructive.

Prostrate humbly at your feet, I beg your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
October 19, 1925

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be the whole desire of our souls and lead us, as you say, to unite us to his heart and make us feel his love.

Your opportune observation that the value of anything we do is measured only by the increase of love, did me much good. And it is important for me to remember it, because although I gave many conferences to various religious and to spiritual persons and I believe they profited somewhat, I feel almost colder than when I started. This happens to me almost every time I go to Madrid. I am so occupied with other souls, I forget my own. That is why I fear very much that in March they will assign me to the new house they are opening at Our Lady of Atocha in Madrid. The Provincial indicated that perhaps it would be better to move the office of the magazine there, but I fear that both the magazine and I would suffer thereby. Pray that God will dispose whatever is to his greater glory and the good of our souls.

I rejoice and give thanks to God that all the nuns were satisfied with my book and have formed a good opinion of it. I suppose it is because they have taken precautions not to read the harsh footnotes, which are to be omitted in the next edition. You will tell me if it is so.

I cannot write more today but I encourage you to follow along the new path that God is opening to you — the path of love and of gaining for Love as many souls as you can.

I bless you for that and I commend myself to your prayers.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Salamanca
November 12, 1925

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be blessed for his infinite goodness and make us grow more and more in his love.

May our Lord and the Blessed Virgin make your vows effective in regard to my poor soul so that each day it will be more under your vows and less under my own, and thus avoid any further manifestations of bad temper and self-love under the guise of zeal for the truth in future arguments (which will certainly occur, unless God removes me from this position because of my incompetence). Thus, with the grace of the Lord, and following the advice of many good souls, especially of two remarkable Carmelites who wrote to me yesterday, I am resolved to be silent on that disputed point, now that the truth has been stated clearly. I plan to continue expounding sound doctrine as if nothing had happened and without paying any attention to what anyone says or may say to the contrary. Nevertheless, many good persons believe that it was necessary to deliver that hard blow in order to call attention to a matter of such importance, which they treated so lightly and with great harm to souls.

Simple souls that do not know this or see no more than the noise of combat, must suffer greatly, and we see that even the apostles asked the Lord to soften his words in order not to "scandalize the Pharisees." But he wanted at any cost to open the eyes of those "blind leaders of the blind." This divine way of acting, perhaps badly interpreted and even worse applied by me because of my blindness and lack of humility, was what made me believe, as the "intellectuals" here also believe, that I should have acted that way. But now I regret that I was not more moderate, and with the grace of God I am resolved to be so, although some will think that it was due to my manner of acting and especially the arguments of Father Ignatius that our opponents have pulled in their sails, in a desire for peace that will unite everyone in the truth. In the end, the one who was indisputably right was that good lay sister in your monastery who said we speak of contemplation but neither the one nor the other has it because of our sins. And so, that our Lord will pardon us and purify us thoroughly and then grant it to us (I don't want the "acquired"), I ask all of you to pray for us, particularly on the Prioress' feast day. That you may remember and that I may help you celebrate that day with joy, I am sending you three books that you can raffle or give as a prize to those who best expound their views or feelings on each side or, if there is no raffle, one for the lay sister who best presents her case and the others for the two who best argue from the heart and from the head respectively.

And so I join all of you in greeting the Prioress and thanking her for her attention, asking in a special way that God will bless her in everything. Moreover, I would gladly send her the address of J. Pastor, but I am not authorized to do so and I must maintain secrecy under pain of losing that collaborator.

Whatever you have written, you may send whenever you wish. Continue to be of good heart, always disposed for whatever love demands of you. Without time for anything more, I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
November 22, 1925

Dear Father:

This time I write you more promptly and without fear of bothering you because parents are never bothered by letters from their children; rather, they are consoled, and this is what I wish — to give my spiritual Father the consolation of a letter. The Prioress told me to write and thank you for your consideration and to send you greetings for your feast day, if St. John of the Cross is your patron. The Prioress thinks it must be the apostle but I think that the mystical John suits you better. She says: "There is no one more mystical than he who rested on the breast of Jesus." Tell me who has guessed your patron; or perhaps it is St. John Chrysostom, although all of them suit my spiritual Father very well.

Also, the Prioress thanks you for your kindness in sending the three books, which will contribute greatly to the joy of her feast day.

Like yourself, Father, I do not want "acquired" contemplation, because what comes from us, stays in us, and I do not want to live in myself, but in God. Whoever is content with what he finds in himself gives a clear sign that he has not tasted that which is of God. It is so different.

But one who speaks this way, does it signify what he has experienced? I am afraid to say so, because I see and feel my great wretchedness like anyone else's great misery. On the other hand, the great saints say that they do not understand or feel anything. And I ask myself: What I experience, is it something of myself? Is it nature or some person that makes me experience these things? The answer is always no. Then I have to conclude that this is something that is not of myself; it is something divine, and can come only from God.

But what is it that I feel? I would like to describe it, but what shall I say? I feel a divine life that overpowers my natural life and makes me live a new life — something great and strong that surpasses the limits of human greatness and strength. If you only knew, Father, how I feel sometimes, especially at the beginning of the day, when I think of Holy Communion, although I receive Jesus with such unworthiness. At his divine contact my soul is renewed each day and experiences a superhuman energy which makes it say: *"Non timebo millia populi circumdantis me."* [6]

This morning, after the Holy Communion I offered to Jesus, I asked him to let me be an eternal glory of his love. I know that this divine love is terrible, that it excuses nothing, that its sufferings are many and great, and that it is a devouring fire that invades and consumes everything. It even takes away the sweet longing for death because love is "as strong as death." In spite of this, I want love to be the scourge that completes my martyrdom. I want to be a martyr of love and be able to say: "Divine love has triumphed over this soul, it has permeated it with its flames, and the soul has become ashes in this sacred fire." Then Magdalen would be an eternal glory of love.

In this suffering of love, I say to Jesus: "What have you done? Tell me, what have you done to my heart that it suffers so? I feel that it has been touched by a divine hand. Only you, my God, can be the one who makes me suffer, because no other hand is so gentle and so strong. Tell me, Jesus, what have you done to me?" And I hear him answer: "I have died for you. Look at me on the cross and you will know." Then I kiss my crucifix repeatedly and ask for more love. If you could see, Father . . . . I feel foolish and at the same time

[6] "I will not fear thousands of the people surrounding me."

so calm and so serene. I never do my work as quickly and as easily as at these times, though I would prefer to be alone and quiet. I feel that there are two of us — he turns the wheel and I let myself be rotated.

When I feel this way, it seems to me that everyone feels the same way and understands the same. It is hard to convince myself that such is not the case. Then, on realizing it, I am sadly surprised and sometimes it causes me such suffering that it makes me want to die.

Now I am praying and suffering for a soul that Jesus wants to make his own, but she flees and tries to persuade herself that she can be at the same time of the world and of God. Poor soul! I notice that Jesus pursues her, and I with him, until she gives herself entirely to his love. I placed her in the hands of the Blessed Virgin, telling her that hers must be the victory. I have named as her intercessor the soul in purgatory most devoted to the Passion of Jesus, and each day I make the Stations of the Cross for her, praying to Jesus with all the strength of my soul. I shall continue to pray for her day and night until this grace has been granted. I want to see who will conquer, and I hope that I shall, or rather Love. Help me, Father. Do me the favor of making a special memento at Mass for a few days and afterwards I shall let you know the results. It is, as I have told you, a soul that Jesus wants for himself. He suffers, and I suffer with him.

Now I am going to tell you something that the Lord has wanted me to say for some time. I shall overcome my repugnance as a suffrage for the soul in purgatory that will obtain the grace of which I have been speaking. What I want to say is that when I die, they should announce my death in *La Vida Sobrenatural* and say that one of the first graces that I shall ask of God in heaven will be for that magazine, for its editor, collaborators and subscribers, and for all those who love it and read it. I shall ask for all an increase of the interior life and a knowledge of the mysteries of love contained in it until they attain sanctity, which will be the abundant fruit that they will all receive who read and are interested in the well-being and progress of that magazine. They will all have a special claim on my protection from heaven and I shall have the obligation of interceding for them, close to God. The sign that I am fulfilling my promise will be the remarkable diffusion of the magazine.

I am embarrassed at having said all this, but if I delay, perhaps I shall not have time to say it before I die. Do not believe from this, Father, that I am going to die soon. My mission is to glorify the Beloved, and I have to complete it in life, in death and for all eternity.

Father, what do you think of what I have said? It all seems possible to me, because although I am wretched and unworthy, I give myself to Love without reserve and I hope for everything from him, and Love is glorified and is pleased with the poor and the wretched who abandon themselves to him.

For some weeks I have felt inclined to ask the Lord for transforming love. [7] Father, would you tell me what this love is like? May all souls ask for it or is it only for advanced souls? It seems to be something of great perfection, but at the same time I think that it must be a very painful love, because it is a tremendous thing to transform a sinful creature into the God of purity. What is the difference between asking God to transform me into his love and to divinize me? Or is it the same thing? [8]

Father, our souls can only find rest in the love of Jesus, for that is a most secure place where no one can harm us or conquer us. Even God is conquered by the soul that loves.

Your answer to the Prioress regarding J. Pastor was very well given. She suspects nothing.

Humbly asking your blessing,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

[7] Transforming love is the highest degree of charity possible to man on earth. It is known also as mystical marriage or transforming union.

[8] Transforming love is the high point of divinization, although it is also proper to speak of the soul divinized through grace at a lower level, but always in a relative sense.

Salamanca
December 5, 1925

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he shower his graces upon all of you during this holy season of Advent, and especially on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, so that in imitation of her, you will prepare your heart as his place of rest and thus atone for so much coldness and resistance, even among those of us who call ourselves his friends and pass as such.

Such should be the condition of him who is writing to you, because he has for a patron the "friend of the Bridegroom," [9] and not John the mystic nor the apostle, although I was very grateful for your greetings and good wishes. But I do not resemble these saints in any way, and as far as my own patron is concerned, I resemble him only in trying to send disciples to Jesus and to give testimony of him. But I am always far from Jesus — in prison or in a desert — not to complete my mission there, but in punishment for my infidelities. Pray that now, at least at Christmas, I shall succeed in seeing Jesus more closely and may learn truly how to follow him in everything. Tell him to touch me and awaken me also, with those touches which in killing, give life.

My daughter, I was greatly consoled by your description of what you are now experiencing. Yes, give yourself completely to Love and to the suffering of love and to the promulgation throughout the world of the work of Love in the manner he suggests to you. He is not subject to any law and neither can they be, St. Paul says, who are truly possessed by the divine Spirit, since where he reigns, everything is a holy and glorious freedom. So always unburden your heart with that same freedom so that whatever the Spirit places in your heart and in your pen will be changed into a fire that will enkindle divine love.

I liked what you told me about announcing your death in the magazine. I told this to the staff, without saying who it was, and they were all very pleased. Father Ignatius said that he was going to pray that you will die soon (I suppose with a mystical death, in order to live transforming love).

I am praying for the soul that you are concerned about, so that she will belong to God completely.

I bless all of you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
December 22, 1925

Dear Father:

How good the Lord is and how pleased he is with any little thing, however insignificant, that one does for him. We were celebrating in the novitiate the enthronement of a beautiful little statue of the Immaculate Conception. When she brought the flowers for decoration, the portress asked to see it. Later, when I went to the turn to retrieve the statue, your letter was at its feet. I don't know how to tell you, Father, what tender sentiments this coincidence produced in me. It was nothing less than a favor from Jesus, one of the many that he grants in order to inflame my soul with love.

Another one occurred on the feast day of the Prioress. As a gift the nuns had made ten outfits of clothing for poor children and some other things as well. I was a bit pained at not having made some little thing that would have been used close to Jesus in the Eucharist so that it could remind him of my love. The very morning of the feast day, the sacristan came to tell us that she had a new veil for the tabernacle but she did not know how to put it on. I offered to do it, and the tabernacle veil was soon in place. While performing this task, a novice came to me and asked that I tell her something about Jesus. I said to her: "My daughter, I can only tell you that Jesus is good, very good.

[9] St. John the Baptist, whose feast is June 24, which is also the date of Father Arintero's birth.

Give yourself to him without reserve and you will see. It is impossible, my daughter, to describe the tenderness and delicacy of his love for souls that seek nothing but to please him." And as a proof, I told her of my joy at that moment because the Lord had granted my desire.

The other day the Prioress asked me to prepare the batter for the hosts, telling me to beat it well so that it would be very smooth. While I was doing it, I was thinking: The Jesus that I love will come to this wheat. But then, instead of the force of my arm I must put the strength of my heart into it. At the time that I was working with the batter, it seemed to me that I was forming Jesus in order to give him to souls in union with the Blessed Virgin, who formed him in her most pure womb. In every grain of wheat I put all the love of my heart. And now comes the favor: Since that day I always have charge of this task. And I give thanks to Jesus, who wants to find my love there when he enters the host. For his part, he makes me discover his divine love every moment of the day.

If you only knew, Father, what a sensation my heart sometimes feels at the words of the *Gloria Patri* . . . . *et nunc et semper in saecula saeculorum* [10] or in other phrases that refer to eternity. On hearing them, I think how in that life without end, I shall love God and shall live in God the life of love.

The Lord lets me experience his love so that I can make other souls experience it also. I think that this is the most efficacious means for making them love him. Let us pray for this grace, Father. Let us say to him: "Jesus, grant us to make souls experience your sweet love so that all will love you." Little is achieved, Father, in any other way. And I think that this grace is readily granted by the Lord to souls that are especially devoted to the Blessed Virgin. It is a prerogative granted to her during her lifetime — all who approach her, experience the goodness of God and love him more.

The whole community wishes you an increase of grace and love in the New Year.

Your poor daughter begs your blessing,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

[10] "Glory be to the Father . . . . is now and ever shall be, world without end."

16.
MYSTERIES OF LOVE

Deusto
January 20, 1926

Dear Father:

I do not know if you will remember that in a previous letter you asked me to write something about the vow of love. I am sending you what I have been able to write with the grace of the Lord. Perhaps you wanted the article to be more brief. That was my intention when I started, but little by little I extended it and I could have written even more. Love is an infinite topic and for me it is — I don't know how to say it — it is, as for Jesus, the purpose for which I came into the world — to love and to make my God loved. Like him, I feel that I have come to cast fire and what else do I desire except that it be enkindled?

It seems to me that the Lord has some particular design for this article I am sending you and hopes thereby to win some souls to his love. You will also see it this way and I am sure you will do what he wishes, for I see clearly, Father, that your voice is in unison with the one that I hear in the interior of my soul. So whatever you ask of me is what the Lord is asking.

Praying that my name may always remain hidden, I ask your paternal blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist,
Dominican Passionist

Deusto
February 9, 1926

Dear Father:

I suppose you are wondering what obliges me to write to you before the accustomed time. It is the wound caused in my soul by the news that you already know. Do you think, Father, that I suffer because things did not go my way. No, that is not the reason. After all that God has made me experience and understand about souls, I think that it is almost impossible that he would let me be moved by purely human sentiments. But I do fear for her soul.

You already know, Father, that I cannot love anybody except in God. And those I love, as soon as they fail in divine love, likewise decrease in my love, because I have no other love except that of my God.

Tell me the truth, Father, because if God wishes that I suffer for souls, no one can prevent it. My life is consecrated to love, and souls are the love of my God. For them, then, like Jesus, I have to suffer and one day die.

Do not conclude from this that I no longer believe what you said you had observed in that good soul. Yet, I cannot help but fear that frequently good souls speak about that which they see in God, namely, his special predilection for a soul, the graces he has given it and wishes to give it, etc., without considering that this never forces the heart of creatures which, because of their free will, can always refuse those graces, as unfortunately happens so often. Nevertheless, I hope that through the merits of the Passion and Death of Jesus and the sorrows of his Blessed Mother that this will not happen in our case. In order to give to the Lord a minister who is faithful and will save souls, I have offered my poor life thousands of times, if it were necessary and if God would accept the offering.

Pardon me, Father, and give me your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist,
Dominican Passionist

Salamanca
March 24, 1926

Dearest daughter in Christ:

During these days of his Passion may he permit us to accompany him in his sufferings, in union with his sorrowful Mother, in order to cooperate as much as possible in his work of salvation and "to fill up in ourselves that which is wanting to his sufferings for the good of the Church."

To that end, undoubtedly, are directed the sufferings he sends you. They are all games of divine Love to detach you more and more from everything so that he alone may reign in your heart forever. Hence, you can apply to yourself the canticle: "She lived in solitude and in solitude she has built her nest."

Without time for anything more, I bless you.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
April 6, 1926

Dear Father:

Alleluia, Alleluia! Rejoice, Father, because your poor daughter also rejoices at being able to give you good news. How I would like to write a book to make known the divine goodness and perpetuate the glory of love; although, thanks be to God, that book is already written and by a better hand than mine: the Holy Gospel. What it says about the goodness of God and his tender love for us, I believe I can verify from what I experience in my soul.

Do you remember, Father, what I said to you in my previous letters? Almost two months ago a dark cloud covered my soul and hid the divine Sun from me. And without him, what can there be but confusion, darkness, sadness and sorrow? No one can give anything if he does not have it. But when he appears, everything is illuminated immediately, and in such a way! My state of soul was one of sadness and I suffered much because it tended to deprive me of the one secure support I have always had — confidence in my superiors as representatives of God for my soul. But when I read your letter, I realized that it was not yet a time for consolation, for I remained as cold and insensible as a rock, and I don't know what thoughts came to my mind. How I suffered! But it was Holy Week, and I thought that for a Passionist nun not to have any consolation at that time should be her greatest consolation and her best means of consoling Jesus. So I was content to pass those holy days in such a state. But he whom no one can surpass in generosity and love came to dispel the darkness.

On Wednesday morning I arose at the first stroke of the bell and on beginning to recite the *"Regi saeculorum,"* [1] as our holy rule requires, I felt the presence of God very strongly and in an extraordinary manner, and the words of Scripture came to my mind: *"Ego, ego consolabor vos."* [2] And in what a way he consoled me, Father! I was completely overwhelmed and practically unable to move, so that I was a little late in going to choir. How many things I then understood! I knew that it was all the love of my God and that his love is the greatest gift he can give to a soul. He made me understand that my previous trial was intended to purify my love for creatures, for although I thought I loved them only spiritually, with how many imperfections I loved them.

I am very ardent in love, Father. I am Magdalen, and in some respects I believe that I resemble the foolishness of her love as recorded in the Gospel. Whenever I meet a person that desires God and is disposed to be his, I immediately begin to love that person as if we were already united in the arms of the heavenly Father and would remain there always without fear. And if later I see that this is not so, I suffer and I even complain to God, as if I should have been able to lead that person immediately to that place of love

[1] "To the eternal King."

[2] "I shall console you."

and keep her there. And this is an imperfection, because only God can do that and it pertains to him to attract us, dispose us and keep us in his love. All that we, his creatures, do is receive from him, without impeding the generous hand with which he gives. Sometimes I think that I am mistress of God and can give him souls whenever I wish, as if everything depended on me. In a word, Father, I understood many things at that moment — my own imperfections and the greatness of God's love.

A grace of the Lord always brings many other things with it, and especially an increase of light and peace. And so, Father, I spent the last days of Holy Week closely united to the Lord. Love not only kept me at his feet like Magdalen, but gave me the courage to ask for "the kiss of his mouth." At the adoration of the Cross on Good Friday, after I had kissed his wounds, I kissed his divine face without fear. If my Jesus is the one who gives me the love with which to love him, why should I fear to love him? No, I do not fear. When I experience that love, love itself reassures me. In the spiritual life, as you know well, one reaches a point in which Jesus wants the soul to spread the wings of confidence and of love and fly to him.

With all my heart, Happy Easter! May the risen Jesus breathe upon you and with his divine power transform you into his love. The Prioress and Sister Pauline join me in greeting you.

Before ending, I want to tell you that I am somewhat uneasy for having failed in the perfection of obedience. I refer to the little wine that you told me I should take. I did it for some weeks but then I stopped, because it seemed that it was not doing me any good.

Father, bless your affectionate daughter.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Deusto
April 8, 1926

Dearest Father:

This is a short letter to ask your advice concerning some extraordinary events that occurred some days ago in one of our monasteries in Italy in connection with the death of a lay sister. She had a peaceful death, but has been appearing like a ghost throughout the monastery, knocking on the doors of cells, and calling various sisters, to whom she speaks, but they cannot understand what she is saying. All the nuns are frightened and do not know what to do or what is the reason for these apparitions. The chaplain applied the exorcisms for three consecutive days, in case they were the work of the devil, but to no avail. Out of charity for those sisters of ours, I decided to ask your advice so we can know how to answer them and give them some direction and consolation. I beg you, Father, to answer immediately so that we can write to them. We have no one else of greater confidence that we can consult in a matter of this type.

Awaiting your prompt reply, and thanking you, I humbly ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
April 9, 1926

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he grant you to live each day a new and hidden life with him in God.

About the events in Italy, do not be frightened. No harm will come from it if they trust in God and control themselves. Rather, they will benefit from it as something helpful for renewing their fervor and making them live with all fidelity the life they have promised, seeing how much one is punished even for little faults.

This affair has no trace of being the work of the devil and therefore exorcism will avail nothing. Undoubtedly, the poor sister is spending her purgatory where she has committed her faults, and this is not unusual. St. Thomas Aquinas, and before him St. Gregory the Great, both teach this. As a soul undergoing punishment, it can do no more harm than to frighten per-

sons until they overcome their fear. Soon they will lose it, because she seeks nothing but help, compassion and suffrages. Tomorrow I shall offer Mass for her out of charity and affection for all of you, so do not send me any stipend. I shall also recommend the affair to the prayers of holy persons. I am hastening to answer you today admidst many occupations so that you can write to Italy and reassure and pacify the nuns. What the Superior should do (or, in her name, the first nun that sees the apparition), is to tell her in the name of God not to bother them any more but to let them know in some way what she desires or what suffrages she needs, and they will gladly try to help her if she obeys. For she should obey the representative of God in the house, and in that way all will benefit. Having done this, they should pray for her and perform some acts of expiation for her faults, and then sleep in peace and not arise until the sound of the bell. They will see that all will be well.

I bless you and recommend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Father John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
April 30, 1926

Dear Father:

I pray to Jesus that of the numerous things I would like to tell you, I shall write only those which will be pleasing to him and serve to increase his holy love in me and in others.

Very soon we shall hold the Chapter for the election of superior, and I ask you to recommend us to the Lord so that we all do what is to his greater glory. It is the first canonical Chapter to be held here.

With respect to Sister Pauline, who in a few days will complete her five years of profession and become "Mother Pauline," I must remind you of her request to offer herself as a victim to Merciful Love, in imitation of her beloved protector, St. Therese. Because Jesus, so unknown in his love, has such need of victims that he has already accepted the offering, since the present state of this Sister is one of total incapacity for anything. Shortly after she made the offering, she began to feel great pain in her eyes and it became progressively worse. The occulist has not been able to find suitable glasses, so that the poor soul cannot even read the Divine Office. But she is tranquil and serene, and has abandoned herself to the arms of him to whom she has given herself and has renewed her offering to Love.

It is truly admirable to see such virtue and such peace and abandonment in the midst of a trial that is certainly no small one for a religious only twenty-eight years old. But love can do and does everything. I am not surprised, because when the ardors of this divine fire are felt internally, one feels no need for any external thing. It all seems so ephemeral. Knowledge, honor — they are given and they are taken away from morning to night. Only love remains and God does not take it from the heart that possesses it. He is the sure support in time and in eternity.

How happy I am, Father, that I have consecrated myself to Love with the vow I made years ago, although formerly I fulfilled it very imperfectly. How many times my miseries made me concentrate on myself, thus clipping the wings of my soul. But now it is not so, thanks be to God. The more wretched I see myself to be, the more rapidly I fly to love and cast myself without any fear in the arms of the Father of mercies, for I know that if I need his goodness, he also needs my wretchedness in order to be merciful. So I joyfully resign myself to being wretched so that my God may exercise an attribute that so glorifies him and from which he receives greater glory.

I confess, Father, in all truth (and you will tell me if I am mistaken) that now I do not anxiously request, as I did before, that God rid me of my defects. I believe that I have received special enlightenment from the Lord on this point. I now realize that certain defects do not prevent the communications of love nor diminish its sacred fire in any way. On the contrary, if the soul has

reached the point at not being disturbed by them, and does not lose its peace but moves forward, serene and tranquil, they stimulate and support love. Sometimes I commit the fault of speaking without sweetness and humility or of speaking too quickly and in too loud a voice. At other times, through lack of reflection, I say things inaccurately. But I do not become upset. I call upon Love, I offer him his own Word, the eternal Word, his Son and my Savior. In him is all that is lacking in my words, and if I had never failed in speech, God would not have spoken that eternal Word which has given us Jesus. And so it is, Father, that I escape from the battle.

I feel that I was not made to fight, but to love. And I think that the Lord must be content because if I avoid the fight, it is not through cowardice or sloth, though I used to be cowardly and slothful, but because I do not wish to concentrate on myself. God asks me for love, and time has been given to us to love, but how short life is! Also, how limited we are. When one is more concerned with one thing, he is less concerned with another, so it is better to be concerned with love so that all our energies may be directed to him.

When those in the house and persons outside reveal their souls to me, I see that all, more or less, have to struggle to practice virtue. Even Sister Pauline, in one of our discussions a few days ago, told me that she has to struggle to conquer repugnance in the practice of fraternal charity, recalling that what she does to her neighbor, she does to God. Others struggle in matters of obedience, humility, controlling their imagination, etc. All this consoles me, and then I encourage others, because I know that the struggle gives proof of one's love for the Lord. At the same time, I know that my path is a different one. Even at the beginning of my spiritual life, my struggles have always been little ones and brief; and now I can almost say that they are over. Do not think, Father, that it is because I am perfect. No, that is not the reason. It is because the Lord has taught me that for those who abandon themselves completely to love, the struggles are over.

However, sufferings do not end, although they are now of a different kind. But who is able to describe them? They are joyful martyrdoms of the soul; they are a flame that burns and gives life; they are a weakness that makes one faint and become invigorated; they are a hunger and thirst for God that consumes and satisfies, empties and fills. I cry out: "O Jesus, I hunger for you. I shall die if you do not give me love. Will you let me die?" Then I hear him say to me: "How can he let you die of hunger who gives himself as your food?" Then I remember that you said in your last article that some souls have the good fortune to die in these sufferings of love. And I say to myself: "Oh, if I could do that also!" Will this happen to me, Father? What do you think? Martyrdom by fire is very painful, but if that fire is the fire of love, it is much more so. He who has experienced it knows it. God is a consuming fire. I feel it within me and it consumes me in its divine flames. I am certain it will succeed, for when God brings a soul to this state, he cannot leave it. He would compromise his glory and his love.

But it is not enough for me that I be consumed; I want other souls to be inflamed. I feel that this flame is not only for me, but for many. This fire does not always make us feel its heat when it consumes us. Sometimes, although the fire is the same, it consumes us without our feeling anything, and then perhaps it is even more painful. Could this be what is consuming your soul in what you are experiencing? Tell me, Father. Do you not experience God in the depth of your soul? I feel him in mine and in yours.

On the feast of our holy Founder I prayed that he would repay you from heaven for the kindness you have shown his poor daughter, who has found in you the guide that her soul needs. Every day I ask Jesus, by his sacred Passion and Death and by the sorrows of his Blessed Mother, that as soon as I die he will take me directly to heaven so that I shall be able immediately to love him more perfectly and to make him loved.

We sent to our sisters in Italy the advice that you sent us, but we have not heard anything from them. God grant that that poor sister may be in heaven

now and that peace has returned to the community.

Humbly asking your blessing,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca

May 6, 1926

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

Out of the love he had for his beloved disciple, may he inflame your heart with new fires of love and thus reward your desire to see it enkindled in this poor heart of mine. But I resist it so much with my imperfections and sins, that it is all but extinguished and although I persevere in my practices and even try to increase them, I continue to be so cold and insensible that I am scarcely aware of my own poverty.

God grant, then, that it be true what you tell me about experiencing God within myself. How I would correspond with such a grace! It also consoled me when you told me of your prayers to your Holy Founder that he will obtain from God the miracle that will change this cold heart into an ardent one with his zeal.

What you say of the sufferings of love is very well stated, and when you have time you can continue the article that you began, because shortly perhaps it will be needed. Remain in that holy peace, without preoccupying yourself with anything but loving and letting God work in you as he will.

I am praying that God will enlighten all the nuns in that first Chapter and will give each one the grace she needs to carry out what is entrusted to her. I ask all of you to pray also for our next General Chapter, which will be conducted at Pentecost, on the eve of which a new Master General will be elected. The good of the Order will depend very much on him, and also the legislation of our new Constitutions.

Encourage the new Mother Pauline to persevere in her attitude, content with whatever God disposes. And if it is fitting, St. Therese will see to it that she recovers her vision, since God does not ask the sacrifice *de facto*, once the will has resolved to accept it.

I bless all of you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately yours in Christ,

Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto

May 10, 1926

Dear Father:

How is it possible to doubt that God is with us? That God is in you and you are in God? Let us not doubt it even for an instant.

Yesterday in choir, during the few moments of recollection before chanting the hours, I said to Jesus interiorly: "Here is your Magdalen. I am yours." And I slowly repeated my name, which evokes in my soul so many tender things. And an interior voice replied in turn: "Apostle of my love." "But the apostle of love is St. John." "So also is my Magdalen." From this I concluded that Jesus wants me to be this, an apostle of his love. What do you think, Father? It does not surprise me at all; whatever Jesus wants, will undoubtedly be done. He has all power in heaven and on earth.

Later, in the afternoon of that same day, when I received your letter, I was amazed at your opening words: "Out of the love he had for his beloved disciple, may he inflame your heart with new fires of love." Father, does it not seem to you that Jesus has both of our hearts in the same hand? What an impression it made on me to be reminded of the apostle of whom Jesus had spoken to me that morning. Now I must love that apostle more, since I must imitate him; and from now on I shall consider him my special protector.

How many things there are in love that are always new and always the same, because one alone is the Good that contains all things. The marvel of love is that in its unity it reveals surprises at every instant and will do so for all eternity. Father, let us hasten to submerge ourselves in this infinite ocean, and

not wait for eternity, because we can do it now. Love surrounds us always; it is in us; it is the movement that gives life to our being, the unceasing aspiration of our soul, its infinite flights, its rest, its sweetness, its peace. The ocean of love is all this. With its ebb and tide it raises up and casts down, it extinguishes and enkindles, it gives us life and death at every moment, until we die in that love in order to live its life for all eternity.

But what am I saying, Father? I do not know. I feel invaded by love but I cannot express what I feel. My heart is not here; Jesus has taken it and he torments it with his love. I suffer, and the cause of it is Jesus. No one can cure me but Jesus. Let him do with me whatever pleases him.

I shall continue to write the articles as you suggested. I neglected them because I thought you did not need them. The two that I have already completed are on the characteristics of love. If you like them, use them; if not, destroy them.

If the Holy Spirit of Pentecost brings you to Bilbao, advise me by a post card, for I would like to know in advance.

Do not bother to answer this letter; it would be too much.

Bless your poor affectionate daughter.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Deusto
May 13, 1926

Dear Father:

Jesus wants me to be a book written on the inside and the outside for the eternal glory of his love, a book written in his own hand; and for that reason he has removed all created things from my soul in a way I cannot express, but you will understand. He seems to have made me invulnerable to personal attacks, to the words or conduct of others. If anything of this nature wounds me, it is only because he concurs in some way to make me realize my nothingness and to recognize his holiness, his power, and especially his love.

In this condition the soul seeks solitude. It feels the need of being alone, alone with him who knows everything. There are moments when people are such a nuisance that it is necessary to close one's eyes in order not to look at them. Their voice, their manner of acting and thinking are so different from what one feels, sees and hears in the inner world of the spirit, that they seem to speak an unintelligible language which annoys one on hearing it. Father, the Lord reveals so much to me on this matter that I don't want to speak about it, for I would never finish. I would prefer to leave it all to heaven. I see the eternal day so close. Life to me seems but a breath.

In this spirit I entered the Lenten retreat. I was dejected, reduced to nothing, almost totally incapable of doing anything. Yet, in spite of my impotence, a new peace inundated my soul. I call it new because I had never experienced it in this way. I felt so alone; it was as if nothing else existed. God made me realize that it is in this state that he can work more freely, because his love wants to be *alone*. For this it is necessary that the soul be despoiled of everything of its own, even of good, or of that which seems to be perfection and holiness. In this state of soul, I sought nothing but the mercy of the Lord and his love. I made more acts of trust and love than I have ever made in any other retreat. May Jesus be forever blessed that he always lets me find rest and peace in his love.

During the eight days I went to confession five times with great consolation. Divine Blood of my sweet Spouse, how much I am indebted to you! How many times you have descended to my poor soul to purify and strengthen it. What do I need if Jesus always places his Precious Blood at my disposition? Nothing; I am rich and happy. I have all his wealth because I have his love. And I have my sweet Mother in whom I find everything in my daily visits.

Humbly asking your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Deusto
June 8, 1926

Dear Father:

I would like to speak to you about my many faults and also of the goodness and the love of God, but there is so much that I would have to say about each one, that in making a choice I must omit what pertains to me (my wretchedness) and choose what pertains to God. What is gained from looking at ourselves? When I spent my time in that, I did not find delight in God nor in his love as I do now. Once I gave up that preoccupation with self, though I am the same wretched person as before, I felt closer to God, stronger and happier.

God works in me in a truly singular manner and I think I can say that he is my primary spiritual director. I see his divine hand so clearly. I see what I am and what I must be. So why waste time in telling you all this and asking many questions? From what the Lord teaches me, I know that this is not necessary.

What I ought to tell you, Father, is that when I fall, I rise quickly, and cry out more vehemently to God that I love him and that through the merits of his Passion and Death I want to be an eternal glory of his love. I should also tell you how much the Beloved attracts and torments me, makes me suffer and rejoice. He wants me to love him very much and to know how much he loves me. Yes, Father, God loves all of us very much and does many things to make all of us love him. All creation speaks to us of his love. Every blade of grass that grows in the field, every flower that blossoms, every movement of the clouds, the stars and the passage of the sun from dawn to its setting — it is all God asking us to love him and to make every beat of our heart an act of love. God is telling us: "Realize that you have an appointed time to love me and to grow in my love, and that time is short. It passes as rapidly as a pulse-beat and it never returns. And once it is past, the measure of love is ended." This truth helps to enkindle the fire of love in our being and to regret keenly that we did not make use of all the moments of the brief existence he has given us for the sole purpose of loving.

Father, nature tends to make us forget the importance of "the one thing necessary," but grace at each instant repeats to us: "Love, give me love." Let us then constantly renew our abandonment to love, so that everything our eyes see will lead us to love, and every word that comes from our lips will be love. Let our hearts suffer the pains of love, with a constant desire for more. And when this love flutters its wings in our minds, let us permit it to spread them freely and the intellect be re-created in the midst of the occupations to which duty calls us. And so, Father, when we speak or write about love, although other beautiful thoughts may come to mind, we should not admit them, because love is always more beautiful and more profitable for us and for others.

Some days ago, and especially on the feast of the Trinity, I was thinking about the power of love, and how it alone suffices to transform a soul suddenly from a sinner to a saint. And realizing that love transcends all human and divine laws and directs and perfects all of them, I wanted to discover the origin of this powerful monarch that conquers everything and subjects everything to its command. But I saw that it has no origin, for it has its eternal throne in the Blessed Trinity. Its origin is the bosom of God, his very substance; it is the life of him who lives eternally. And I understood also that in that same place our souls will love perfectly and will find eternal rest. O, Father, before this horizon which opens to my soul, I yearn for eternal rest in love.

And permit me now to say something to you. When you speak of yourself in your letters to me, I find more discussion about your self-knowledge and wretchedness than about the power and the grandeur of love and what love has effected in your soul. Why is this, Father? You see that your daughter does not do this. Let us cast ourselves on love without fear; first ourselves and then others. It is necessary that they realize that we live in love and that we love them in this love. How much more effective it is for winning souls to

God if we can teach them about love, to act as if we were all love and had left the body, although sometimes it bothers us and makes us aware of its heavy weight. And do not fear, Father, that there is any deceit or hypocrisy in this. I used to fear this also, but not now. The Lord has freed me from this fear and many others. Let us be more what we desire to be than what we think we are, and we shall be closer to the truth. You will tell me if this is so, and if I have not explained it well, God will make you understand.

I wanted to say this, Father, because I think it is of great importance in order to establish ourselves in love and to go forward. At least it has been that way for me. I think that I have in myself all of the imperfection, evil and worldliness that I had years ago, but at the same time I feel that it is not mine, because I have renounced it and I feel free of it. Even living so close and so united to evil, I feel that I live my life in love. In the midst of my wretchedness I am rich and I intone the victorious canticle without any fear, because I know that all the glory belongs to love.

To be able to love God! If we only knew what a great blessing this is. There is none greater even in the beatitudes. And how sweet rest is when we have exhausted ourselves by loving. After a day of work, of performing so many tasks, of writing and of speaking, what a consolation it is if we can say: "I have loved God and have made him loved." This is my greatest consolation when I leave the speak-room or have consulted with others in the house and am weary from talking.

Frequently I find notes from the other nuns or the novices slipped under the door of my cell, asking for advice and help. At first I feel a kind of repugnance (which I have not been able to overcome) in having to teach or advise others, when I myself am so imperfect. But then I feel in my heart a great consolation at being able to communicate the heat and fire that consume me, thus fulfilling the purpose for which God has enkindled it in my soul. For I understand that this love is given not only for myself but also to communicate it to others. And I do not envy anyone; I have the greatest possible happiness.

If you only knew, Father, how I am praying for you these days and for your holy Order. Jesus wants me to do this. Ever since you permitted me to call myself a Dominican Passionist, I consider this Order as my own. I also prayed for your Chapter, as you asked me, and in a special way on the day of the election of your Master General.

At the feet of our sweet Mother, I ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
June 17, 1926

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he so inflame you with his love that he obliges you to spread it throughout the whole world. Yes, I would be greatly consoled to see you so inflamed and so afire with love and, even without knowing it, to be a true apostle of love.

Both of your letters consoled and encouraged me, and if it were not that I continue to experience coldness and do not remember for long periods to make spiritual communions which would inflame my love, I would be at peace. But within me a voice reprimands me for not doing half of what I should do, though often it is due to forgetfulness, in spite of my good intentions. But I have been accustomed to speak not of my lukewarmness, which could affect others, but of that which God asks of everyone. So I work with enthusiasm on the devotion of Merciful Love, which is inflaming many hearts, and I ask the Lord to let them love him for me. In this way I spread the fire that I myself do not have.

The election of our Master General turned out better than anyone could expect. Father Bonaventure Paredes, a very spiritual man, was elected. So give thanks to God and continue to pray for the success of the Chapter in the rest

of its work, especially in the delicate task of correcting our Constitutions.

I have accepted the invitation to speak at the Marian Congress at Covadonga on the universal mediation of Mary. Perhaps you could write a little article on this subject, under the name you use for the magazine. You could write a few more pages than you usually do for the ordinary articles.

When you have time and as you receive light, continue also to write on the theme of the martyrdom and joy of love.

Without time for anything further, I bless you all and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately yours in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
July 6, 1926

Dear Father:

When I received your last letter my heart was weighed down with sorrow because I had just received word from my Passionist sister of the death of our mother. You already know the sorrow of realizing that those eyes that have so often looked on us with love are closed forever and that the mouth that has given us so many kisses will never speak again. Only faith can console us with the assurance that those who precede us have not died, but have fallen asleep in the Lord, waiting to awaken with us when the Lord shall call all of us to that life which has no end.

The day that she died was the twentieth anniversary of the sacrifice she made of her two daughters. She accompanied us to the convent, but first took us to the cathedral at Lucca where, weeping and in a loud voice, she said: "Lord, you have given me these two daughters whom I now give back to you. You know how much it costs me, but I do it willingly out of love for you."

On recalling her words, I think that this is sufficient reason to hope that God has taken her to heaven to receive the reward of her sacrifice. Her soul can present itself without fear before the divine Judge after having given him her two daughters as his brides.

I was her "Benjamin." Poor Mama! How much she suffered at that separation. In this respect, I have caused many people to suffer, because they have always liked me very much. It seems that God has created me only to love and to be loved, because he has always enabled me to find love everywhere. In order to respond to all, I want to become a saint, I want to love God very much because only in that way can I repay my debt of love — loving and making others love. For a moment I wanted to be united with my mother in heaven but our Lord told me that I was already enjoying him by making the fire of his love burn in many souls and that this would also be my greatest joy in heaven as long as there was a soul on earth capable of growing in his love.

Every day I have the happiness of doing some good for a soul, either among those in the house or from outside. The Prioress has told the latter that they may come and speak with me and that she wants them to do so. Actually, most of them do come. And on feast days I spend the whole day in this way. If you could see me, Father! It is as if I were a confessor. They tell me everything, and the only thing lacking is to give them absolution. I rejoice and I suffer because this causes me much confusion and embarrassment. But I do not want to oppose the manifest will of the Lord. The Prioress has commanded me to listen to all of them. So many souls displease the Lord because they do not wish to give themselves as instruments for communicating his love to others. Sometimes, under the pretext of humility, I do not want to belong to that number.

For that reason I have little time for writing. On Sundays there are a few hours free and I welcome them. If I could have a whole hour at a time, I think my articles would turn out better and you would not have so much work to do on them. Poor Father, may God reward you for the suggestions you give

me in this regard. I wanted to ask this kindness of you but I did not dare because I did not want to take up your time.

With the grace of the Lord, which I hope to obtain because it is you who command me, I shall write that little article you requested. I shall speak with great joy of our sweet Mother, but with some fear that through my ignorance I shall deprive her of the glory that another could give her. I shall let love make up for my deficiencies and I am also heartened by the fact that you will delete or add whatever seems best to you.

Pray for my mother and bless me.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
July 7, 1926

Dearest Daughter in Jesus:

May he be your consolation and your reward. I hope that he will be your consolation in the painful loss of your beloved mother, for whose soul I pray to God in all my prayers. I shall offer a Mass for her as soon as possible so that our Lord will bring her as soon as possible to eternal happiness. When I received the sad news, I was so upset that I had to content myself with sending you a post card. I have asked Father Sabino [3] and other good souls to pray for her to God.

And I pray that our Lord be your reward for the greatly esteemed greetings, for which I don't know how to thank you. On the one hand, for the beautiful ribbon, which is now being used with the little spoon for the chalice, and on the other hand the spiritual bouquet of acts of love and sacrifice. If they do not convert me, it must be because I am incapable of conversion. In order to avoid that, I shall strive to give myself more and more to Merciful Love as my only remedy, and to the Mother of mercy.

We shall see if I shall succeed in praising this blessed Mother as she deserves at the Marian Congress. As of now I do not know what I am going to say.

At the end of this month I must preach in your area and therefore I hope to see all of you very soon.

I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
July 28, 1926

Dear Father:

I am going to tell you something about my soul since I believe that you desire it.

My soul is enjoying great peace — I could even call it an anticipation of heaven. My spiritual life is so simple (and now more than ever) that I scarcely know how to describe it. I don't have to do anything to seek it, for I feel that I am living in a region of light which makes me rejoice and suffer at the same time. I shall not try to analyze this delight and suffering; you will understand them from the articles I am sending you and those I shall send you later, although they lose much because of my manner of expressing myself. Sometimes everything happens at once; the soul feels and understands in an instant. But in struggling so much to describe it, it becomes very strained and things are not explained as they really are. Perhaps someone else could say it better, although perhaps no one really can.

I have told you, Father, that I do not have to do anything to live the spiritual life, because I feel that I am living it. Am I deceiving myself? I do not believe so, because otherwise they would have to prove to me that one can find happiness and peace outside of God. What do you say about this, Father? The Lord is giving me special graces and he wants me to know them in order

[3] Father Sabino Lozano, who was to follow Father Arintero as Mother Magdalen's spiritual director.

to appreciate them. The means that the Lord uses to make me know this is the souls that confide in me. There are many such souls, as I told you in my last letter. Many open their hearts to me as if I were their director. And remember, Father, what I have frequently mentioned: for many years God has given me the desire to be a director of souls.

I can see that all souls feel more or less a need for spiritual direction. They want advice and help. I see also that they need more solitude, more interior silence. I, on the other hand, do not experience these needs. I feel free of everything, by a special grace of the Lord, for he shows me that since all these things are means for going to him, they are something outside of him. They are good for one who needs them, but for the soul that already lives in God, they are not necessary nor does the soul feel any desire for them. To desire them would be like descending from a state that is higher and more certain. My norm is not to rid souls of the desire for these means until I see that God himself removes them. Rather, I tell them that since they are means, it is good to make use of them as long as they are within our power, but not to seek rest in them, because that is not the place of our rest. They are external means, things on the surface; but that our souls may find rest, they must be detached from everything and penetrate the interior, that royal chamber, that hidden and solitary place which is called "the bosom of God." There, Father, all needs and all desires cease. I do not know what that state is; it seems to be a state of death, because the soul does not work or want or desire anything. Someone else does everything in it. If it has any desire, it is only to win souls for Love, to lead them to that precious dwelling where there is room for everyone.

This, Father, is the only desire that remains in the interior of my soul, although it would be more exact to say that this is what God desires of me, since I know that it is not mine and does not come from me, but from him who is Love. It is proper to love to need to expand and diffuse itself, and in infinite Love there is room for all. So this desire cannot be proper to a human being because of our smallness and limitation. In us everything is small, there is nothing of good in us, and we cannot communicate happiness and rest to souls that tend toward God as their only center. We do not deceive ourselves on this point, for we see clearly that God alone is all and that we are nothing.

Another thing that contributes to the peace that delights my soul is the certitude that God places at my disposition whatever is necessary for me to make satisfaction for my sins, without any preoccupation on my part, and to attain the sanctity and love that he asks of me. All I have to do is accept from his hands what he ordains and disposes. He does everything in such a remarkable way!

How much I could say about this! And although here I can write little, I shall say something so that you can give me your opinion. The Lord wants me to take only what is necessary in food and rest. Sometimes the body wants more, and this causes some suffering. There are nights when I sleep very little and afterwards I feel tired. Nature complains, it seems that it can do no more, but I try to pay no attention to it and to go forward, because I know that God measures the amount of sleep and food that I need. And I know that this is so because after I have filled up what is lacking to the Passion of Jesus by some extra sacrifice, the Lord lets me sleep well at night or eat a little more for some days. In that way he gives me the strength to be able to return to my former practice. And this must be the life of those who are in the exile of this life, far from their true homeland. The same is true in regard to my work, physical indispositions, mishaps of daily life, annoying situations, etc. I see the paternal hand of God in everything and I understand (and this is what gives me joy) that this divine hand ordains everything in a very special way for those who love him and live by faith. He does this with precise justice so that on leaving this life, all the debts of the soul have been paid and it can go directly to heaven without passing through purgatory.

Whatever faults I sometimes commit, Father, this is the grace that I firmly

hope to receive from the Lord in this state of blind abandonment. Most holy Mary, with a glance of perfect love toward God and a glance of compassion toward me, will be my salvation and as the gate of heaven, she will open it to me at once so that I can enter into the joy of the Lord as soon as I leave the prison of the body of

Mary Magdalen of Jesue in the Eucharist, D.P.

Deusto
August 27, 1926

Dear Father:

In spite of the intense heat, which we all feel, my soul desires fire and more fire. It begs and longs to burn in the furnace of eternal flame; there to be destroyed, consumed and turned into ashes. This would be, I believe, the only medicine that could promptly cure all my evils. But am I perhaps ill? I feel no symptoms in my body, but I eat little and am getting very thin. The Prioress says I cannot go on like this; and she wants to call the doctor. But if she calls him, I must tell him that I am well and have no pain. All of the nuns are afraid I am going to die. But if I die, I die. I do not know why they are so fearful. One lives better by dying than by living in this wretched world where one sees nothing but things that kill because they are contrary to love.

On the feast of St. Dominic, when I went to recreation in the novitiate, I was pleasantly surprised by a statue of the Saint between the shields of your Order and ours. And at the feet of the statue was a gracious poem entitled "Dominic at the Novitiate." The first santza was:

"Come innocent flock, quickly leave the knoll,
To hear the ardent word of my faithful son Arintero."

And the last stanza was:

"Your Paul wants you to be Dominicans in the Passion;
In the hope you will obey, I give you my blessing."

What a deep significance this had for me. How many things came to my mind concerning the possible union of our two orders. Is it my imagination? I do not think so. I believe that every union that begins and continues in the love of God produces an increase of that same love and that it must necessarily grow stronger and be perfected until it attains that blessed unity in God, the goal and center of all unions and all loves. Those of us who have helped others love God in this life, what shall we experience in heaven? On the vigil of the Assumption I was able to give a little help to some souls and the Lord showed me something of the joy he has prepared for us in the next life. A special love that flows from God, the source of all good, will circulate among all those who have been mutual instruments for the sanctification of souls, and they will be permeated with a special joy. This special love is like a circle or a wheel that spins at great speed and brings happiness and delight to all the souls who have loved each other in this exile; some as instruments of sanctification, and others as recipients of their operations who have then helped others according to the divine plan. All will enjoy infinite happiness and at the same time no one will want to keep that joy and glory for himself, but will share it with the one who has been the blessed cause of that blessedness, until it reaches the first cause, who is God. And then God will give back that happiness in even greater abundance and in a manner ever new for all eternity.

Let us take courage, Father; let us take courage! God has wonderful things prepared in heaven for those of us who not only love him but dedicate ourselves to making others love him. This circle or divine current that emanates from God revolves around those who love each other in God even in this life, but very imperfectly as compared with that of glory. But what an abundance of pure joy it sometimes causes us to experience!

Meditating on these things, I have such a desire, such a longing, such a thirst to widen that circle and to enter that current of love, that I feel I shall die. I feel as if I contain it within myself; its violence is that of a fire that is

contained and cannot spread out, as is characteristic of fire. But I have said that it is a current and then I said it is a fire that is contained. These two things may seem incompatible. I do not know what it is; I do know that I am not deceived and I do not deceive anyone, because love does not have only one characteristic, but all kinds of characteristics — because love is everything. It is water and fire, light and darkness, rest and torment. No one can restrain it, for it is free and it goes where it will; it is in all parts and yet it can also be restricted. Where? Where there is sin. Sin restricts love. But love remains free, continues to be what it is and loses nothing. What mysteries these are, what an abyss of light and truth! I don't know what foolish things love sometimes makes me desire, do and experience.

One night I dreamed that I was at home in my parish church, teaching catechism. The pastor approached me and told me that there were many people to go to confession and I should go and help him in that ministry. I don't recall what I did, but I know that I rejoiced greatly that night in thinking that I was applying the Precious Blood of Jesus to souls. How great and rich I seemed to be in holding that treasure in my hands. But on waking in the morning and realizing that the motive for my joy was not a reality but a dream, I felt sad. Then Jesus approached and consoled me by saying: "No, it is not a dream. Do not be sad. It is a most certain reality that my Blood is yours; it is in your hands to apply to souls as you will."

This is true, Father, and although I do not do so by administering the sacraments, I can still do it in other ways and sometimes with greater profit than with the sacrament of confession. I can apply this treasure of the divine Blood to my soul and offer it to the eternal Father for the conversion of sinners, the dying, the Church, and for priests who hold in their hands the Blood of Jesus, all of it, as a fountain of life and a source of infinite riches. They have the happiness and a consolation that were mine only in a dream; namely, the administration of the Sacraments. Do they realize that they give to Jesus the satisfaction that he longed for during his whole earthly life, when his loving heart was tormented by the desire to put his Blood in the hands of his ministers for the enrichment of souls? How eager they should be to administer that Blood and how they should rejoice at being able to give this consolation to Jesus! This divine fountain has never stopped flowing since it first began. But how often it has been close at hand but there was no one to gather it and apply it to the souls that need it. Father, let us always be eager to draw water from the fountains of our Savior, to wash our souls and beautify the souls of others. I have a great thirst for this: to receive the Sacraments and lead others to these fountains.

I do not know, Father, how my soul is or in what state, but God alone suffices for me; everything else wearies and annoys me. Taking advantage of Father Victorino Osende's visit, I spoke with him for about an hour. [4] Among other things, I asked him what is the state of a soul that wants nothing, seeks nothing, has nothing and needs nothing. He smiled and said: "Do you think that I can answer all of this?" I already knew that he couldn't, but I knew that he understood and I like to ask (and I do so purposely) things that I know cannot be answered, because I like to see that even the most learned persons cannot explain, and that they admit it. Then I am more certain and satisfied that these things are of God, whom no one can comprehend nor understand everything that he does in souls. We understood one another very well and we are completely in harmony in our feelings about God.

I do not know, Father, what I feel for you blessed sons of St. Dominic. I think that God has made the Dominicans for me and has made me for the Dominicans.

Although it would please me more if no one knew the idenity of "J. Pastor," when you speak of me with some of your brethren, at least be so

[4] Father Victorino Osende later became a renowned author of books on the spiritual life. Two of his works, *Pathways of Love* and *Fruits of Contemplation*, were translated into English and published by Herder of St. Louis.

kind as to warn them to say nothing. Of course, I also understand that it is sometimes good to make love pass to others, for the Lord gave it to us for this reason.

How do you feel, Father, in all this heat? Do you feel the same as your daughter, who desires more and more fire, more and more love?

Humbly asking your blessing, your affectionate daughter,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
September 14, 1926

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

I received your letter while in Oviedo; it consoled me greatly and animated me for the Marian Congress, which turned out much better than anyone could have expected. There was a marvelous cordiality among all the delegates of priests, lay people and religious. All of them seemed to be true children of the Blessed Virgin and may she bless them. As regards myself, the attention the people gave to me was a source of embarrassment. On the evening of September 10, with Jesuit Fathers as deacon and subdeacon, I was celebrant for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the presence of the hierachy. We marched at the head of this large assembly from the Basilica to the cave. [5] It was a very moving experience.

At 9 o'clock on the morning of the next day I addressed the entire assembly in the Basilica, and on the 11th I addressed the ladies. That evening I gave a report on the articles that they had given me to examine, among them the one by J. Pastor, from which I gave a long quotation which was well received. I was also asked to give a reaction to a conference by a Passonist Father, professor of theology at Mieres. I gave a favorable report and he was so pleased that he would not be separated from me. We returned together on the train and when I left him he agreed to write an article for the magazine. He asked me if I knew Mother Magdalen and I tried to hide the fact by saying that I appreciated all her efforts to promote the magazine and my teaching. He also spoke of the Father General and I asked him to greet him in my name and to tell him that I would send him some books. We must foster greater union between our Orders, as you have stated in your letter and was manifested in those verses of the novices.

I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
September 23, 1926

Dear Father:

What things I dream of! Are they illusions? Sometimes I ask the Lord and he answers in the interior of my soul: "Whoever dreams of my glory, of my love, or of saving souls, is always awake, even though he dreams; he has my assurance that those dreams will become most certain realities, because the dreams of love are eternal truths which are enjoyed in heaven."

This encourages me greatly and I believe it also will encourage you to dream at all times and in all places of the love of God. Let our imagination go as far as it pleases on this point, let our desires be increased and widened as much as possible; what God can do will always be greater. We shall never reach the limits of this shoreless ocean. We shall always be at the beginning of eternal goods.

One day, while reciting the Office, on saying the words, *"Et episcopatum eius accipiat alter,"* [6] the Lord instantly revealed to me a world of things. I understood that the Lord assigns a particular mission on earth to each soul; if it

[5] Our Lady of Covadonga is a national Marian shrine and the center of devotion is the cave or grotto at Covadonga.

[6] "Another person received his episcopate."

does not fulfill it or if it is diverted from its path, some other soul will replace it and will receive the increase of grace and glory that the first soul refused, for God cannot be thwarted in the designs of his infinite wisdom. Then I cried aloud in my soul: "Lord, may no one have to replace me in my mission of love. I want to perform it all. I want to fulfill completely your designs for me."

Father, is it true that it must be this way? Yes, because Jesus wills it. As he perfectly fulfilled his mission up to the *"Consummatum est"* [7] on the cross, so also he wants us to fulfill ours, even if we have to die as he did, submerged in sorrow. Only Jesus and Mary will be my substitutes, because I need them and I want to need them. As for others, everything that they can do, I shall do, with the grace of God. I don't want anyone to take my place or give love where I have not loved.

Humbly asking your blessing,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Deusto
September 29, 1926

Dear Father:

So great is my desire to send you these few lines with Father X that I cannot forego doing it. This makes me think of the joy of God when he can freely communicate his graces to us by any means he chooses, without that source of infinite merit finding any obstacle. With what gentleness and generosity he then penetrates souls, gladdens, fructifies and sanctifies them. The Lord teaches me that this is the most important point of all for attaining sanctity. The more things benefit us and help us attain our ultimate end, the more they are used by the Lord and worked into the plan traced out by him for each soul. I don't have to meditate on this truth, Father; I have it engraved on my soul by the loving hand of him who is light and love and does not want the poor spouse who follows him to walk in darkness.

This light causes me incessantly to renew frequently my abandonment to Love so that he can always work freely on this poor creature who belongs to him under so many titles. In the interior of my soul I renew this abandonment at every instant and it sometimes pleases me to do it externally in the hands of my superiors or their representatives. Yes, Father, I renew to you the abandonment of this little ship of my soul so that you may direct it quickly to the dwelling where eternal love has its throne. It does not need anything else but this: to reach Love quickly.

In this disposition the Lord fills my soul with a joy, a peace, so that at times it seems to taste the sweetness of a heavenly honey. Sustained by this nourishment from heaven, why should it seem strange that frequently the body feels no need for physical nourishment? Has not the prophet said: *"Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum"*? [8] This does not imply that I find myself in this state. As regards myself, I judge nothing and I understand nothing; that is your function. I only describe what I experience.

The Prioress complained that I eat very little, but do not think, Father, that it is so little that I live by a miracle. I do not eat much, but it is an ordinary amount. I cannot eat more. If it is because the Lord does not want me to, I do not know. But it is not because of my sickness, because I do not feel ill, except for the weariness and sluggishness that I sometimes feel and to which I think I should not give any importance, since suddenly, and even on the same day, I find myself strong again and everything turns out well.

I have a feeling that I have not much longer to live, not because I feel weak, but because a higher power attracts me. It seems that the Lord is telling me

[7] "It is finished."

[8] "My heart and my flesh will exult in the living God."

that the earth is not a healthy place for those who are ill with love. Heaven is their home.

I humbly beg your blessing.

Your affectionate daughter,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
October 10, 1926

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be your life and your breath, your waking and sleeping, so that nothing can affect you except the charity of Christ.

I received your letters and, as always, with great consolation at seeing how the work of God is gradually being realized in your soul. You have no reason to fear or doubt any of the things you have described to me; rather, they are new reasons for growing in love. As to your food, if you remain in good health and preserve your strength on your present diet, and if eating more could possibly be harmful to you, suggest to the Prioress that she leave things as they are, because you have consulted me about the matter. Otherwise you may really become ill.

As regards the Association of Love, it would be well to obtain ecclesiastical approval and indulgences for the practice itself but not for any specified prayers.

Please tell the sister who wrote the verses that they were delightful. Perhaps some day we could publish some poetry in the magazine.

Be encouraged to maintain those sentiments of filial abandonment to the hands of God. I am sending you the enclosed pages with my corrections so that you can rewrite them at your leisure.

Without time for anything further, and with greetings to all, I bless them and ask for their prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
November 2, 1926

Dear Father:

When I write to you I would prefer to speak to you only about what I experience and what is in my heart. Consequently, it is difficult for me to speak about other things. I think that you also, in writing to me, would much rather treat of the things of God if it would not take your time from other duties. Sometimes it is necessary to leave Love for Love. How full of love my heart is!

On the feast of Christ the King I renewed my vow of love with special fervor. I told Jesus that just as he desires to reign in me through love, so I also want to serve him out of pure love, to live for him and die for him.

Love is a fire that burns by itself in eternity. God feeds it. But on earth it is necessary that we work to maintain it, inflame it and make it increase. And how these efforts are rewarded! It is impossible to seek love and not find it, since God is near, waiting for us. He waits for us when we depart from him and when we forget him. He waits for us to depend on him when we work or when we suffer. And when we go to our rest, he waits for us to call him so that we can rest in him. Even while we sleep, he waits for us to open our eyes in order to receive our first thought and the first beat of our heart. Love does this to all, and much more to souls that are consecrated to him. One morning I said to him on awaking: "Jesus, I love you, I give myself to you without reserve, I want to be the perpetual slave of your love." I heard him respond: "Love has no slaves. The greatest freedom resides in love, but outside of love, everything is slavery."

Those who do not live in love are slaves of a most cruel and despotic master — self-love. But he who abandons himself to Love becomes master of Love, because Love gives himself without reserve. So you see, Father it is true

that Love awaits us at all times and in all places, and not only faithful souls, but those that are nothing but misery and sin, such as mine. If you only knew how I see myself in the Lord! I think that God illumines me with his light, otherwise one would never see himself in such a deep abyss of wretchedness. At the same time he sustains me with his grace so that I will not become discouraged or despair at the sight of the horrible state in which sin has placed us.

When the Lord reveals to me my nothingness and wretchedness by means of these interior lights, in such great contrast to his holiness, it seems as if he is asking me: "If it were in your power and choice to join these two things — God and your soul — what would you do?" I answer: "Lord, I would never unite them, in order not to profane your perfect holiness. Depart from me, Lord, for I do not deserve to look upon your infinite purity." And then, when the Lord seems as if to depart from me, I cry out: "Lord, do not leave me, do not abandon me, for if you depart, I don't know to whom I can go. Only you can heal my wounds, cure my infirmity, enrich my poverty." At that moment my soul looks at God, not in his grandeur and majesty, but only as love become infinite mercy toward me. And I cast myself without fear into his arms because I see that God wants his mercy to excel and shine forth in all his works. Therefore, Lord, I shall be a glory of your mercy and a triumph of your love which, in conquering me, has made me yours forever. And this is the way it pleases the Lord to act with my soul. His own hand, which seems to kill and annihilate, lifts me up and gives me life. And what life, Father! I feel completely united with him, made one thing with him, and I can do all things.

Then I tell him that I want to be an apostle of his love in all places throughout the world, from pole to pole. I want to tell everyone about the marvels of Love so that all will give themselves to him. But how can one who is wretched and helpless do all this? I do not know, but one who loves does not stop at this because he knows that love can do all things. It is necessary only to will it. The desires of one who loves are efficacious works performed by love, and once one has desired something, he is no longer concerned about anything. Then the soul can be at peace and rest tranquilly in love.

You see, Father, how many things love makes one say. But where is it when it makes us speak this way? It is in our mind, in our heart, it permeates our entire being. It is in our mouth when we speak, in our hand when we write, so that the divine perfume that it leaves in our words and writing can gently penetrate souls and inflame them with love. And if love makes us act this way now, when we possess it so imperfectly, what will it be like when we are totally transformed in him? With what ease shall we fly from one end of the earth to the other, inflaming all souls with his love!

I am returning the article you sent for rewriting. I added something to the introduction, toward the end. I think you will receive a special glory in heaven for your patience in reading and correcting my manuscripts. I have almost finished the article on the sufferings of love. Unless you say otherwise, I shall begin the one on the joys of love.

May God be always with you and your daughter, who desires to obey the divine will in all things and asks your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
November 9, 1926

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he fill you more and more with his love, giving you an ever greater hunger for it, so that you will constantly seek him and find souls who can help you love him.

Your letter was very consoling; everything in it served to animate and inflame even a heart as cold as mine. What you said about the feast of Christ the King made me make up for my forgetfulness of the vow of love, for

although I made the Act of Consecration after Mass, I renewed the vow only implicitly. Since I fulfill my obligations so badly, I sometimes fear . . . Nevertheless, I often rectify matters and I have just finished renewing the vow of love as fervently as possible. Only in love and mercy can my poor soul find peace, so when I read or edit anything on that subject, I feel most recollected. Therefore, I hope that whatever you can prepare along the lines of what you have told me can be published at the same time as my "Ladders of Love."

I was gratified that your Father General again expressed his agreement and that of other Passionist Fathers,with the doctrine we defend. This encourages us to continue defending and explaining our position. I would like him to know my good feelings toward him and thus strengthen the union between our two Orders.

Give the Prioress my best wishes for her feast day and I shall make a special memento of her to the Lord. To contribute to the celebration of her feast, I am sending some new pamphlets on Merciful Love, of which you may keep a copy for yourself. I hope that the reading of it will increase your holy love and make you breathe that love and spread it to others.

Ask God to inflame my heart with love so that I can enkindle love in others. That is all for now because I have many things to do, including preparation of the next issue of the magazine. I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
December 11, 1926

Dear Father:

Sometimes between my letters to you I have doubts or worries about something and I tell myself that the next time I write to Father I shall ask him about it. But when the time comes, I don't ask you anything, or very little. And if I try to say anything, it seems that a gentle force dissuades me and invites me to do something better. It is as if someone were to say to me: "Why do you want to waste time on questions and doubts? Don't you know and feel where the love is that you seek?" And I do feel it, it is true, but I am not as certain as when you, Father, reassure me and console me with your words.

At other times the interior voice seems to say: "If you are seeking your own satisfaction, you ought to be fearful. But if you are seeking my love and my glory, you have no reason to fear. Speak of love, because love will give light to Father so that he can see and understand the things of your soul better than with words, and you will receive the assurance you need. Love of me is a light that illumines both of you, and the soul receives it in proportion to its needs and dispositions. Thus you will receive what you must always seek above all — an increase of love as well as the solution of your doubts." This is actually what happens, Father, but I wanted to tell you so that you can give me your opinion.

I feel something very deep within me, which rises from an inexplicable depth, and at the same time something very lofty, which descends from sublime and incomprehensible heights. And I know that this is Love himself — sublime, transcendent and incomprehensible to the human mind. He dwells at so great a height that no creature can rise to him, so he comes forth and descends to souls, and these are the depths in which, without losing any of his sublimity and grandeur, he unites himself to souls to raise them to himself.

But both in his sublime grandeur and his immense profundity he remains inexplicable. It is a mystery, the greatest of all mysteries. Even the profound mystery of the Blessed Trinity is included in the love of God for his creatures. In the measure that he reveals the mystery of love, we know the mystery of God, one and three. For the soul that does not love, it remains completely hidden; it cannot know it. There is no wisdom capable of giving us a

knowledge of God, but love knows him because, as St. John says: "Charity is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." It is love that enables us to know. First God is loved, and then he is known. How much this means to me, Father! And how well I know that this is so!

In the beginning, when love is still small, one knows little about God, but as love increases, so also does the light which enables us to know him. What unsounded depths of wisdom and light are contained in love! But even though they are profound, Father, it seems that sometimes I understand them and the Lord says to me: "I have given you a knowledge of the mystery of love. What more do you desire?" And then I understand, for when a soul has grasped the incomprehensible, the infinite and the eternal in this love which will forever keep our souls in ecstasy, it has understood everything. Not in an absolute sense, however, for although what we understand suffices to make us completely happy, it will be eternally incomprehensible. The mystery of love is an eternal mystery. But in glory we shall be perfectly happy because a knowledge of love will be given us according to the full capacity of the soul. What remains to be understood will not torment the soul or cause it suffering as it does now. The body prevents the soul from being able to receive the plenitude of love and hence, with St. Paul, we yearn for freedom and suffer much until we obtain it. I know that the others do not think this of me because they all think I am always happy and never suffer. In one respect they are right, because I do not suffer in regard to temporal things as I see others suffer. But let them think what they will, because I know very well that I suffer, and God knows it. At each instant my soul cries out: *"Ubi est Deus tuus?"* [9] No one suffers or rejoices as much as one who loves, and I know that this is so. And the Holy Spirit says: "He who is not tempted, what does he know?" Nothing. He can know nothing of suffering or of joy.

How clearly we see what we are in the light of that love which had to descend so low, even to the abyss where we are! How many imperfections I see in myself. I do not find a single perfect action. Sometimes I ask who will enable me to perfect what I have begun in order to be able to offer it to God as something worthy of him. But I can never succeed and I realize that it is impossible because of our present state of imperfection and misery. Neither protestations nor vows are of any avail. The most perfect thing we can do is recognize our imperfection in everything, trust our works to love, and believe that it will perfect them. Only then are our works worthy of God. The more keenly I am aware of my incapacity, the more strongly I unite myself to Jesus with love and, like a branch on the vine, I feel circulate through me an abundant sap that gives life and merit to my works and sacrifices. I reflect that Jesus suffered to give power and merit to my suffering, that his Passion is my heritage, his Blood purifies me, his death gives me eternal life. What would I be without Jesus? I need him and Mary at every moment. Jesus gives me life and Mary preserves it by keeping me always united with him, with her maternal arms ever ready to assist me.

Father, let us be courageous and not be afraid of anything. If Jesus and Mary protect us, who can be against us? I have such great assurance of receiving everything that I hope for, and the rest which I don't know how to hope for but the Lord wishes to give me, that it seems that I already have everything in my hands. And do we not have everything, in possessing Jesus? Father, do you know what I hope for? I hope to become a saint soon; I hope to die of love for Jesus; I hope to sanctify other souls and gain many for the Lord; I hope that as soon as I die I shall go straight to heaven, without passing through purgatory; and I hope that you also will obtain these same graces.

The Prioress and Mother Pauline send their greetings with my own for a Merry Christmas.

I humbly ask your blessing.

Your affectionate daughter,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

[9] "Where is thy God?"

Salamanca
December 31, 1926

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he inflame you more and more with his holy love and make you enkindle with that same love all those with whom you communicate, thus giving you a New Year of fruitful apostolate.

I found your letter here when I returned from Madrid a few days ago, and it served to moderate somewhat the coldness that I feel, more in my heart than outside.

I have made the acts of love that I could as I was able to remember. I hope that they will reach the number of 350, although I do not try to count them. Your words inspire me to make reparation for my many neglects concerning the vow.

I have also received great consolation in seeing that you include me in your hope of gaining many souls and of going directly to heaven. May God do this, cost what it may.

In regard to your health, follow the method I gave you, as long as you feel well, but if you begin to get weak, you would do well to take the nourishment that the Prioress advises.

For the rest, always remain at peace, for it is true that I understand you better and I myself benefit more when you speak to me of love, in which everything else is contained. Therefore, when you write to me, do not tire yourself with thinking, but tell me very peacefully what is happening to you. Tell me, as now, the nothingness and the wretchedness you experience in yourself, and at the same time what you experience of God. And with this you will express the "All and the nothing" which comprises the science of the soul.

I bless all of you and commend myself to your prayers, wishing for all of you a New Year filled with blessings.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

17.
ALL AND NOTHING

Deusto
January 20, 1927

Dear Father:

My heart is pierced with sorrow. I don't know how to describe what I am suffering. Perhaps it would be better to say that Jesus is letting me share his sufferings for souls that are unfaithful to his grace. Sometimes he makes me suffer for a particular soul. God asks holiness and love from all souls, but as regards those who have never approached him in the intimacy of love, he sees their wretched state but tolerates them with less suffering. On the other hand, those who heard his voice as a tender lover and approached him, were held close to his heart, tasted of his love, shared in his peace and then gave him nothing but the ingratitude of forgetfulness, how greatly they afflict his paternal heart. They never learned that between the beauty of the love of Jesus and that of creatures there is an infinite distance, because no pleasure can compare to that of loving God.

How pitiful is the state of these unfaithful souls! The Lord surrounded them with the most tender solicitude of his delicate love; he gave them the strength to perform generous acts in order to dispose them for a special mission, and they were about to enter into the field of conquest where they would have won souls for love, but because they did not conquer themselves, or did not break with some affection, or did not rid themselves of attachment to their own will or their own body, they frustrated the plans of the Lord and a whole torrent of previous graces that were directed to that end. It fell to the ground, was lost, and they trampled on it. How is it possible, Father, when one loves Jesus, to see his love so badly returned, to see such ingratitude for such goodness, and not suffer or die of grief? I would rather die than live where Love is treated this way.

If I could only gather together all the graces that God wants to give to souls and profit from them myself! But far from doing this, I also need someone to make up for my infidelities and obtain pardon for me. I look around and I do not know to whom I can go, because we are all culpable and need others to intercede for us. But not all approach him who is our only substitute and helper — Jesus. Not all who know they are unfaithful call upon Jesus and trust confidently in his mercy and pardon. If at least they would go to Mary, the Mother of mercy, who was given to us by the Lord for that reason. But they do not do so; they keep delaying, without reflecting on the brevity of time and that the precious moment of grace, in which Love seeks out our needs so his power can shine forth in us, passes very quickly. Father, I see myself as the most wretched of all souls, but it seems that Jesus loves me more than other souls because I always take refuge in his love, believing with a firm faith that he is my salvation. Jesus is infinite in his mercy, and what is infinite cannot be exhausted by me, a limited creature.

I already told you, Father, that Jesus has taught me the mystery of his love, but do you think that I am satisfied with that and do not desire and seek more? No; when the Lord makes me understand anything, there immediately is awakened in me the desire for something better. I know that this understanding is nothing more than the beginning of his favors if something better does not come to us from that. When I understand something, I act like a child that has been given a piece of candy and stands looking at the one who gave it until he gives the child more. And how willingly God gives more!

The revelation of the mystery of his love does not consist simply in sterile knowledge. It means to believe in that deluge of marvels, without understanding anything except that it is infinite and incomprehensible. It means to live in him in time, as secure as if one were already in eternity, for I seem to hear Jesus say: "Who will be able to snatch a soul from the bosom of love

where I have placed it?"

Father, it seems that these things pertain more to heaven than to earth, the place of exile. But both time and eternity are from God, and what he does for souls in eternity, he can also do while they are still in this world, making them to be one thing with himself. And how God yearns for the moment of union!

If time limits us at the same time that it gives us the chance to increase and make progress, such is not the case with God. As far as he is concerned, time does not limit him (that is, when he works in us while we live in this world), nor does eternity increase him in any way, because God is outside of time, and eternity is not something distinct from him but he himself is eternity — eternal life, eternal love. When, by an excess of his love, God gives to the soul whatever it is capable of receiving as a wayfarer on earth, the soul already lives in eternity, as it were. The space that separates it from eternity is filled and the soul penetrates the depths of divine love. When I say: *"Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper,"* [1] how my soul perceives that in these words one refers to him whom the soul loves and is its life!

Eternity! This word, which is often considered a frightening truth that makes weak and wayward souls tremble and turn in on themselves, is the source of the greatest blessings for the soul that loves. What things it says to the soul; what joys it produces! When I speak of love, I always speak of the love of God, because there is not and cannot be any other. Love is union, and it always tends to union; without it, there is no love. But this union exists only in the love of God, which is not limited by time. At the moment of death, how many loves will vanish from those who now call themselves valiant lovers. They will disappear in an instant, as if they had never existed, and that which seemed to be an ardent flame will be turned into eternal ice. They were not true love because they did not have the characteristics of love. Love is one, and being one, must be the same in God and in us, because it proceeds from the same principle and is of the same nature — eternal and omnipotent. When these two qualities are lacking, there is no love.

The love of God in us is a divine emanation of his ineffable charity, which is his very substance. If the souls that possess grace, even in a minimum degree, understood this well, if they realized that they possess an infinite treasure, a fountain of eternal riches, undoubtedly they would profit better from it and they would live more happily. But their self-will and egotism prevent the awareness and enjoyment of this sublime truth. Divine love wants to be the only love. It wants souls to be like children that do not know how to walk and let themselves be carried.

I once heard a religious (who was very spiritual) say: "I cannot do this because obedience does not permit me." I thought to myself, "If souls, and especially religious, only knew how much this fidelity to obedience exalts them, they would more frequently have on their lips and in their hearts the words of this religious." Then this law of obedience would regulate all their actions and change them into movements of the soul toward God. It is a great pity that the point at which their love meets the greatest resistance is here. They forget that love wants to dispose completely and at all times of those who give themselves to it — in life and in death. And when it finds souls that do submit in this way, it makes them its own. A precious example of this is Mother Pauline. Since offering herself as a victim to merciful love, she has been in her bed immoble for a month because of a possible tumor on her leg. What admirable patience she has! I am her nurse; once when I came upon her weeping, I asked her why she was sad, and she replied: "I am not sad, but I am weeping out of gratitude that Jesus has accepted my poor offering and his love works in me." Please send her a special blessing, for this will give her happiness.

Your words also console me very much. When you said in one of your letters, "May God bless your dreams," how happy it made me. And I said to Jesus: "Your minister says this to me and I firmly believe that you will do so."

[1] "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be."

I know that you were not referring to ordinary dreams, but I believe that the Lord has extended his blessings to them also. The other night I dreamed that I died for love of Jesus, repeating: "Jesus, I love you." I woke up on earth, but one day I shall awaken from my dreams of love and be in heaven.

I ask your blessing.

Your affectionate daughter,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
January 31, 1927

Dearest daughter in the merciful love of our Savior:

May he enlarge the wound with which he has pierced your heart so that the cries of your suffering will be echoes of love that awaken and inflame many hearts.

On reading and re-reading your letter, my heart, which is so cold and deaf, seems to be awakened and inflamed with desires of responding to his love. But then I immediately forget everything and return to my insensibility and routine, though I try by every means at my disposal to spread the fire which burns in others and to fan it as well as I can with my poor articles so that others may love and suffer that which I neither love nor suffer.

I am pleased with what you tell me about Mother Pauline, who is so happy at being a victim of Merciful Love. Though she may experience the value of the hidden treasure, it does not lessen the value of those sufferings with which she tried truly to return love for love. May God bless her and keep her and show her his house and in the measure of her sufferings flood her soul with ineffable communications. And may he bless you with the plenitude of his blessings from heaven and make you experience ever more the mysteries of love and eternity and give to your voice the power to make them resound throughout the world.

I am writing you in haste because tomorrow I must go to Madrid though I hope it will be only for a few days, and before leaving I must have the magazine ready for the printer.

Without time for anything more, I bless you and commend myself to your prayers and ask that you pray especially for various grave matters in which I must intervene.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Father John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
February 19, 1927

Dear Father:

I want to tell you some simple things, badly expressed perhaps, but they come from the heart aflame with love for Jesus, and are meant to inflame the souls that he loves with a particular love.

This is the way it pleases him to work — he on whom all creatures depend. He selects the most vile and ignorant so that his power and his love will shine forth more greatly. I am one of those vile instruments in which the grandeur of divine love and its infinite power must shine forth. But for the time being it is necessary that I experience a suffering love. Father, if you only knew what this love sometimes causes me to suffer. I am going to reveal something to you that will serve as a consolation in the state of dryness or insensibility you may experience at any given moment. You know, Father, that your poor and weak daughter does not deserve to go the way of the strong. Ordinarily the Lord leads her on the path of the little ones, carried in his paternal arms or in those of Mary, my sweet Mother. But sometimes he puts me down for hours or even for days, and then how terrified I am when my feet rest on the earth. I feel as if I have been let down from an immense height and that God is so distant that I shall never be able to reach him. I forget everything, it is a great effort even to say a Hail Mary or a simple ejaculation. I remain without any idea of God or of spiritual things, as if I were a sinner that was just converted.

I have a firm will not to offend God, but I feel within me a longing, an emptiness, an anxiety as if I were about to fall from a great height. How much effort it costs me then to tell God that I love him and to believe that I really do!

Recently these periods of suffering have been frequent, followed by a wave of love. I shall describe one incident. We were at Vespers. I had scarcely started to pray when I began to hiccup and I couldn't prevent it or the noise that accompanied it. The Prioress looked at me, smiling but also a bit concerned because I was disturbing the others. Since the hiccups continued, she gave a signal that I was to kneel in the middle of choir with my arms outstretched. I obeyed at once and the hiccups stopped. This act of obedience filled my heart with joy. I then returned to my place, feeling as if I were in God's arms, when as previously he had seemed far from me.

Undoubtedly because I am weak, God sends me these waves of suffering and joy, but keeps you in that other state. Be consoled and have courage, for although that state may be more painful, it is much more secure and of much more benefit. As long as one tries to experience divine love, it is not yet pure, stable or secure. But suffering which proceeds from hidden love is indeed secure. Father, do not desire to depart from that state and do not ask God for anything else, because there is nothing better than to serve him without any other consolation than that of not having any consolation for love of him. This is what Jesus taught us in his Passion and Death.

Sometimes, when reflecting on those strong souls who are faithful in fulfilling their obligations, who suffer and work untiringly for the glory of God without any sensible consolation or attraction, but only in pure faith, I think that God is asking himself: "What shall I give to these servants of mine who serve me in this way?" Then my thoughts fly immediately to you and I envy you. It seems that God does not know which riches to select as a reward for these souls. Courage, Father, because God yearns more than we do for the moment when he can make us see his adorable face and taste and experience the sweetness of his divine love in its fullness. This must suffice to make us see everything else as insignificant and to give us the patience to wait.

In what I say to you for your consolation, it is not myself, but the Lord speaking to you through me, because otherwise I would not dare.

And what do you say, Father? You know that the food of the strong is not good for little ones like your poor daughter. But in spite of my limited powers, I am confident of flying with the wings of love to the heights reached by the strong and to sing there with even greater energy the *"canticum novum"* [2] to the eternal glory of love. This thought sometimes makes me want to be even more poor, insignificant, impotent and imperfect. What a joy to be less, so that love can be magnified!

Father, bless your poor daughter.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
March 17, 1927

Dearest daughter in "sweet Jesus, Jesus love":

May he in his good time give you both suffering and joy in the form best suited to your soul. although for now the love of our Savior manifests itself as strong and sorrowful as death. Those "games" should not seem strange to you; rather, through them you will learn more about the "sufferings of love" and be more inspired to explain them to others.

Take courage then, and do not be afraid or dismayed, although at times you may feel as cold as ice and incapable of any good. In this way you will learn in a practical way that we are pure nothingness and we do not know how to do anything but resist and obstruct the work of God in us. Once you realize that, you will let him be free to take full possession of your entire being so that he may be your All.

I was very grateful to you for your efforts to encourage me and you did suc-

[2] "New canticle."

ceed somewhat, but far from God's treating me as one of the strong, he is obliged to depart from me because of my sloth and tepidity. And I do not even suffer from that coldness and carelessness in everything. Ask Jesus to inflame me truly with his love, even though it be a suffering love.

I have nothing more to say for now and have much work to do. I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately yours in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
April 2, 1927

Dear Father:

Before we enter the weeks of the Passion, when the Bridegroom invites me in a special way to forget everyone in order to think only of the unsounded mysteries of his love, I want to send you this letter to help keep us united during those days at the place of the supreme love where Jesus died for us. It seems, Father, like a century since I have written to you, and I feel the need to inform you of many things that my heart is experiencing.

You know well, Father, that when God wants a soul to live the life of the spirit, he infuses in its intellect a light by which he makes it see things, not according to appearances which deceive, but according to truth. And then, how differently the soul sees everything. Sometimes, out of pure goodness, the Lord gives me something of this precious light. It is not constant, or always with the same intensity, because if it were, I think that I could not continue to live. In the world of the spirit the soul sees around itself unlimited, infinite extensions. It feels enlarged, it loves, it rejoices, it suffers, but independent of everything, light and free, as if flying through infinite space, completely happy.

On the other hand, in the world of material things, everything is small, limited, lowly. Everything tends toward the earth and corruption, everything is a heavy burden that oppresses. Yet, most people are attached to the earth and they make their condition worse because they love the earth, without doing anything to rise to the heights where Love awaits them. It is impossible that anyone who receives this light should not yearn for permanent and eternal union with the Lord. But when the Lord wishes to prolong the soul's exile, he lessons this light, and then the soul feels content on earth, passing through it as the Savior did, doing good. And that, Father is how I experience happiness. My field is small for the time being, but perhaps it will be widened when love wishes. I am so certain of this that I do not envy anybody else's lot.

For almost four months I spent the first quarter of an hour after rising and the last hour before retiring in works of charity for the sick. Formerly, at the first sound of the bell, I hastened to the chapel and was usually the first one to greet Jesus and accompany him in his sufferings by making the Stations. But now I accompany him in his sick brides. Sometimes I seem to hear the words: "Do you think that it is a small blessing to begin and end the day with the exercise of the queen of the virtues which is charity?" And when, on retiring, I recall that I have committed faults, the same interior voice repeats: "Charity covers a multitude of sins." Then I give myself peacefully to my night's sleep.

I beg you, Father, if there is anyone sick in your house, visit him, thinking that it is Jesus who awaits you. Tell the sick that no one gives greater consolation to Jesus and accompanies him more closely in the suffering of his Passion and Death than those who willingly suffer for him the pains that he himself has sent them. And tell them that each of these sufferings, physical or moral, is destined to give them another trace of the countenance of him who was the most beautiful of all the sons of men. Tell them not to lose these graces by desiring to do something else, even though it be good. God does not need anything except that his creatures let him work in them as their absolute Master.

In this way, Father, we shall be united during these holy days and we shall prepare to celebrate Easter with great profit. When souls are united in God by the golden chains of fraternal charity, he looks on them with the pleasure with which he gazed on the works done by the most holy Mary, all of which touched his heart, because they were done out of love of God and of neighbor. It is a brooch placed by the hands of Mary over our hearts so that together we shall always love him more whom we have promised to love with all our hearts.

At the beginning of this letter, I was going to tell you about the points I composed at the end of our Lenten retreat. I cannot keep any order in the affairs of my soul and it seems that God cannot do so either in order to lead me to him. He gives me his love when he wishes, how he wishes, and where he wishes, and leads me upward and downward without any measuring of degrees or grades. I find that I am everywhere and don't know what is my proper place or where I am going. He only makes me perceive his love and understand that with that I am secure, wherever I am.

But let me summarize the points before I forget. The awareness of my nothingness, in contrast to God, who is All, was particularly strong during the retreat. This was echoed in the grace that accompanied me without ceasing, infusing in my soul an ardent longing to lose myself in the divine All. This was my predominant thought at every moment: to disappear forever from the sight of all, to bury myself and lose myself like a drop of water in that infinite ocean, to be annihilated in that abyss of love so that no one would think of me. It would be as if I had never existed. I wanted to remain forever in a state of complete forgetfulness — I of all creatures, and all creatures of me, both in time and in eternity. Then there would be only the love of my God and God himself, to whom be glory and praise forever and ever. I found joy and peace in this, and God showed me that he has glory both in himself and outside himself — in himself, from all eternity; outside himself, when time began with creation. And so I also must give him glory, buried and hidden in his bosom, where his divine Son is, has been and always will be; and like the Son, I must go forth to make known his name to the world, to glorify him and make him loved. I seemed to see myself united with Jesus and singing with immense jubilation the glory of eternal love to all the world and doing all this without leaving the bosom of God, where his divine Son has always been and is now, including the time when he appeared on this earth clothed in our mortal flesh.

This interior and exterior life in God and outside of him, as I understand it, can be lived by us in a certain way right now as Jesus lived it. For this we have the same faculties, powers, soul and body that he had. What a blessing this is can be appreciated only by the soul that endeavors to live this life. Jesus dwelt among us not only to live our life but, much more, to raise us up to the life that he had and has for all eternity in the bosom of the Father. That is why he became man and that is the will of God for us — to become God by participation.

As you see, Father, my soul tends always to the infinite with great longing. It tends to love, but it also rests in tranquil peace because love promises it great things, that love which deceives no one because, being eternal, it cannot die. It gives all that it promises and much more besides.

Very happy Easter in the name of the Prioress and asking your blessing.

Your affectionate daughter,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist

Salamanca
April 22, 1927

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he raise you up to a new life where you may glorify the Father with him by making his name known and giving him the love that he deserves at the same time that the Father keeps you dead and buried with him, forgotten by everyone and hidden in the bosom of God.

The points from your retreat were very good. May the Lord who began this new phase in your soul, bring it to a happy conclusion. This is the hour, the most opportune hour, to pray that his name be sanctified and glorified and that our work for this end be blessed.

I have just sent to the printer the last proofs of your article on the characteristics of love. Your article, "Sanctity is Love," is already printed, and within a few days I shall send you five copies. May they go forth with the blessing of the Lord and produce flames of love, but of true love that knows how to sacrifice itself.

During the days of the Passion I tried to keep it always in mind and to joir in your intentions. I would gladly have visited the sick in order to share in the sentiments that you spoke of and to communicate them to the sick, but there are no sick in the house at present, thanks be to God. I shall remember to do this when there are some sick. For your part, continue with the sentiments with which God inspires you and you will thus realize the plans that he proposes for his greater glory and the good of the sick sisters.

That is all for today. I spent the whole morning at work on a project and then received many letters. I wish to all a very happy Easter with a great increase of new life. I bless all and commend myself to their prayers.

Affectionately yours in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
May 8, 1927

Dear Father

"Quam magnificata sunt opera tua, Domine. Omnia in sapientia fecisti, impleta est terra possesione tua." [3] I put this in Latin because I do not know how to translate it, but this is what the Lord now makes me experience; the greatness of his wisdom in all his works. In a profound silence, my soul admires the grandeur of God. I don't know how to say which of his works speaks to me or how it speaks to me, since they all are silent and cry out in silence and my soul remains in silence, repeating: *"Omnia in sapientia fecisti . . ."* I do not know any voice as powerful and musical as this one or any that summons my soul with greater power. But of all the divine works, there is one that surpasses all of them, and it is what God works in our soul. This is what brings me to this state of profound silence, to that abyss where one can do nothing but be silent. How little it matters then, Father, what happens outside, what they think or say of us, whether they praise or insult us. Nothing can disturb the soul, take it from its solitude, or interrupt its silence.

Jesus wants souls to sleep peacefully on his breast, without anybody bothering or waking them, depriving him and the souls of the joys of love when he wants to give them to us. As for me, the state in which the Lord has placed me is one of insensibility to all external things. I sense my complete nothingness, that I exist only for him who is with me, who rules and governs me. He is my all and with him I can do all things. I feel strong, capable of great things. There is no illusion here, Father. Things are seen so clearly: I am nothing; God is all. I feel as if his infinity were enclosed in my small being and I feel that I am filled with God. Oh, Father, what things love does! And to think that we are still existing in time, where it can be given to us only in little drops. What will it be in eternity, when we shall drink from the torrent of this love?

The mystery that I do not understand is how two things so contrary can be united: sanctity and sin, consummate misery and infinite wealth, God and Magdalen. Father, explain what these mysteries are; and if you cannot explain them to me, tell me that you do not know. Then I shall cry out with all the power of my soul: "It is love, that love which can do all things, does all things, and in which I wish to live and die in order to love eternally."

[3] "How great are thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is filled with thy riches."

God has made all things with wisdom. The world is filled with his power. But what he does in our soul surpasses everything else because it is the work of his love. It seems as if he put aside his grandeur, wisdom and power, to show himself as the God of love, and in that love as our brother, our friend, the life of our life.

Father, who could make known to all how much God loves us? When I see that anything I do contributes to this, how happy I am and encouraged. Let us work at this, Father, knowing that the reward of Love will be Love. I remember that one day, when I had no desire to write and was thinking of the time that you would spend on my affairs, I heard these words internally: "Think of yourself and do not be concerned about Father, for I shall give to each one his reward." And this reward is nothing else but love.

Your affectionate daughter who asks your blessing,

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
May 15, 1927

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he empty you more and more of self in order to fill you completely with himself, so that everything in you will breathe love without your experiencing anything but the impulse of the divine Spirit who fills the whole world.

Yes, infinite Love inclines to smallness, to nothingness, to emptiness, to fill it with his torrents. So I rejoice greatly that now more than ever he makes you feel your nothingness so that you will not apply to yourself any of the praise that people may give you for your articles.

Without time for more than these brief lines, I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
June 4, 1927

Dear Father:

Since our Prioress has renounced her office, I must supply for her until we have an election. How long these days will seem to me. In order to console me somewhat under this burden, I busy myself with sending food to sick people and the poor who live near us. This evening a very interesting thing happened. The Prioress did not hear the bell ring for Matins and remained in bed. I, on the other hand, thinking that it had already rung, got up an hour early. It is well known, I told her, that the office of superior drives away sleep. With what happiness will I sing the *Te Deum* next Friday, the day of election, when I shall have someone to obey. I think I could not live without that. Even the desire for food has left me. And yet I do not on that account cease to be at peace. Jesus asked of me an act of blind abandonment to love. I made it, and if now I fear that I could possibly fail under my heavy burden, I realize that I belong to Love, and then I regain my calmness and go forward.

Where can we be more secure than in the hands of him who is Love and is the cause of our existence? So I understand that my life is love, without which I would not exist. God is my life; he lives in me and I in him. We are made one through the union of love, that love which is in all parts and all places. How I realize the truth of the words: "If I ascend into heaven, thou art there. If I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Love is always with me. He follows me constantly to give me life and to give me death.

Father, they think that I am getting thin because I am ill, because I do not eat. It is not that at all; it is something else that I experience, and why not say it? Right now I am experiencing an ardor that is vehement and gentle, sweet and painful, that gives me life and gives me death. It is the love of Jesus. He is

the cause of my suffering. When I look at the cross, I say: "I am the cause of your suffering and you, your love, is the cause of my suffering." It is useless to think or want to believe anything else. What one feels always exerts more influence than what one thinks, because what one feels is God himself penetrating our inmost being. It is as if he has engraved on my soul the words: "God is love"; and I add: "And Magdalen is the fruit of love and must be consumed in love."

One day I offered God a particular suffering and work in union with those of Jesus, but I felt that he was asking more of me, saying: "I have so many souls that suffer, and do so in a holy way, with merit, not out of pure love but to be transformed in love. And although suffering helps effect this transformation, it is not suffering that accomplishes it, but the love that completes what suffering cannot accomplish."

Let us remember this, Father, when we suffer anything. Suffering does not suffice nor does it suffice even to suffer for Jesus. It is necessary to *love* with Jesus in order to attain the summit of transforming love. To love with Jesus is to love with his heart, which is to have our heart made one with his. As long as one does not love in this way, he loves little. And to think that Jesus offers us his heart at each instant, "O love of my Jesus, fill my heart and that of your servant, Father Arintero, so that we can both love as you wish to be loved." This, Father, is what your poor daughter wishes for both of us.

We have had the Chapter for the election of Prioress and Mother Gertrude was re-elected. As for me, I am the same as before, Mistress of Novices and Vicaress, with the difference that until now it was a nomination by the Prioress, but henceforth it will be by canonical election. May God give me the grace to fulfill my obligations, which are not small. And may there be a constant growth of the Spirit in all of us. While the re-elected Prioress made her profession of faith with her hand on her Missal and the Holy Scriptures, and swore to fulfill with fidelity the duties of her office, the Lord made me understand many things. All authority and the persons invested with it are worthy of respect and veneration. God dwells in them in a manner similar to his presence in the consecrated Host, in which, hidden beneath the veils of faith, he exercises his sovereign power in order to win souls. There he is the bond that unites souls to the will of the heavenly Father, keeps them in constant relation to him by the fulfillment of his will, and is Priest and Victim of propitiation for them. How sublime is the role of superiors and how great the relations they have with God. Before them I feel overwhelmed in a way similar to that which I experience in the presence of the Lord. I want no one to surpass me in the respect I have for superiors and in the faith I have in their word and their dispositions. Formerly, in the exercise of my office it would embarrass me when anyone knelt before me, inclined her head or gave any other sign of respect, but now that the Lord has given me more light on this point, I am almost indifferent and it almost gives me joy when they come to me with such faith and humility. The reason is that I understand that when a subject goes to a superior in this way, she always receives the grace that she needs, for she inclines to the Lord and obliges him in a way to grant what would perhaps otherwise not have been granted because of the imperfection of the superior, who is only an instrument. I said this to Mother Pauline when she told me that she was embarrassed to sit next to the Prioress to receive the signs of obedience to her as third in authority in the monastery. I could speak on and on about this and other things. The Lord makes me see it all in the light of faith, truth and love, which is so different from the way things are seen with our physical eyes.

Humbly asking your blessing,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Deusto
July 12, 1927

Dear Father:

How profoundly the soul experiences its nothingness when God is hidden,

for without him, everything remains as it was before his *fiat* of creation. But I also know that when the divine Sun hides his rays, it is a good for the soul and a glory for Love, because it is when we see only our nothingness that we begin to learn how to appreciate the works of Love and the power of the Spirit who brooded over the chaos from which creation received its being, life and fruitfulness.

God is doing this same thing constantly in the spiritual order, giving life and fruitfulness to souls. And many of them scarcely notice that it is from eternal Love that they receive life and that they live only through him. Convinced of this truth, I do not lose the sight of the profound abyss of nothingness into which I am submerged when my God is hidden. Then I raise my eyes to him and say: "You will come, O Love, you will come to give me life. And thus I shall possess your very life, because I do not want to have any other."

But I prefer to remain in my nothingness than possess a life that is life only in appearance. It is not to live but to die, if one lives the life of those who do not receive the life from Love. He who does not live in love, dwells in the region of death and if he ends his journey there, he will die for all eternity; but if he ends in love, he will have life in love for all eternity. Father, if souls only knew what this means!

I would like these souls to hear my voice, first from the heights to which love leads souls and makes them experience love, and then from the depths in which they remain as long as this love, which is their life, is hidden from them, so that they will be amazed to see the effects of a momentary or apparent abandonment by Love. Calvary tells us this in the sorrowful cry of Jesus who, though victor over death, could not bear the apparent abandonment of Love without calling out.

Father, I do not know why I am speaking to you in this manner, because I cannot say that I find myself in this state. I am too weak to be treated in this way. But it is true that occasionally I find myself in this nothingness in which God is not seen or known, and then I see and understand what we are without him. And when God enables us to understand these things, they are experienced also. If you only knew the times I do not know where I am, what I desire, what I can do or what I love. I desire and I seek, but I don't know how; I love, I suffer, I rejoice; but I don't know how. Sometimes I am afraid, and at other times I feel secure. I have certitude when persons ask me questions or consult me about something. Then I understand and can answer them. But if I find myself in those same conditions, doubts and fears overtake me. I don't know what to do, and what I have said to others, serves me not at all.

Do not think, Father, that God has placed me in love and lets me rest there tranquilly, without having to do anything. No, it is not that way. How many times I have to make acts of faith and hope in love and make acts of love without feeling or seeing anything. At other times I feel it but do not see it, or see it but do not feel it. God constantly asks me for love, but to be able to give it to him always . . . . How many ways there are of giving it! He wants me to live in love, and always to live in love and by love . . . . in how many ways one must love!

What do you say about all this, Father? I would like to know something about yourself. How do you act? What do you do to give God love at all times? Sometimes all I can do is recommend myself to the Blessed Virgin, to her who was the only one who loved and did not lose faith in love when the dying Jesus was abandoned by all. Mary always loved and will always love. She has never for an instant ceased to love and to live in the world. What better protector than Mary, so that our hearts will beat without ceasing for Jesus?

O voice of the soul that calls for love at every instant! How shall I satisfy you? With nothing, for you are my torment, but also my rest and my consolation. The more you torment me, the more I shall be animated. This is the only relief that I can or will give you.

Father, I recommend a soul to you and ask that you recommend her to

others. I am very interested in her case and am praying for her. Also a young girl from Barcelona has written, asking me to correspond with her. I have just answered the letter but she says very little about herself and I do not know how I ought to proceed.

Some days ago some nuns from Bilbao came to speak with me and they told me: "You write for *'La Vida Sobrenatural'*, we are certain of it." It was very difficult to get out of this situation, because we women are worse at this than men, and we can't trust everyone because not everyone can keep secrets.

Prostrate at your feet, I humbly ask your blessing.

Your affectionate daughter,
Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
July 14, 1927

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he reward you with his infinite treasures of knowledge and the loving wisdom of God for the spiritual bouquet you sent me for my feast day. I don't know how to thank you and those who helped prepare it. The picture is beautiful and costly, but not proper for the cell of a poor friar, so I think I must give it away. I appreciate the cost of the material and the time spent on it. Let this be the last time that you do something like this, for it suffices to send any little thing that can be enclosed in a letter.

The feast of St. Mary Magdalen is approaching and I don't know how to make a return except to wish for you all the fervent love of that saint and the zeal with which she inflamed as many hearts as she could. In imitation of her, may our Lord make you another apostle of his love and give you the light and ability to make known to all the marvels that divine love works in souls. In your last letter I found things that encouraged me, such as your statement that in spite of my insensibility and obscurity regarding everything good, I seem to understand well and even sense to some degree what others need and all turns out well when they follow it. I have light and certitude in that regard, but in similar circumstances I cannot apply it to myself. I see myself not only incapable of any good, but so inclined to evil and so remiss in asking God for light and strength, that I always have to lament (and I lament very little) thousands of faults and slothfulness in everything. With your spiritual bouquet and those from others, I hope I shall improve. But I experienced only a little fervor at seeing the sacrifices that were made for me. I am like one incurably sick . . . . May God have pity on such wretchedness.

I liked the verses and I am thinking of publishing them without much delay. So you can tell the nuns who wrote them that in due time they will be used to great profit. In this way you will have an explanation when, as in the case you indicated, people say that the nuns of your monastery are writing for publication. You could even respond, if you think it opportune, that the Prioress told you to send me some things but they needed much correction, or that if you knew how to write in Spanish, you would gladly do what you could for the magazine, or perhaps J. Pastor is Father John himself. Do they not see at the end I sign "Fray"?

Regarding the girl from Barcelona I have no information. Go slowly with her, touching on love, fidelity and confidence, but without going into any detail as long as she does not speak clearly.

Without time for anything more, I bless you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately yours in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
August 4, 1927

Dear Father:

I have prayed to St. Dominic for you and I have thanked him because he has given one of his sons to be the father of my soul. I don't know what the

Lord is doing with my soul. He casts me into the profound abyss of nothingness, and then, when I experience nothing but wretchedness and impotence, he asks great things of me and an ever greater faith that all his plans of love for my poor being will be accomplished. I cannot explain this, Father. My soul does not see or understand; it only experiences its nothingness and the depths of an intimate abyss. I do not know what will happen to me. Shall I always remain buried there? What a blessing! I am nothing and God is all. But one abyss calls to another, and I shall pass from there to the abyss of love, where I shall finally say: *"Haec requies mea in saeculum saeculi, hic habitabo, quoniam elegi eam."* [4] In the first abyss, love is covered with the veil of faith.

In this state of annihilation my soul finds a very great peace that makes me happy. I know that sometimes the cause of our unrest is the awareness of our smallness and impotence and the futility of our efforts to practice or grow in virtue. But when the soul recognizes its own nothingness, all this unrest ceases. The soul is no longer disturbed by the faults it commits; rather, on seeing its failures, it rejoices at being so wretched, it more quickly lifts its gaze to him who is everything for the soul, it clings more to him and goes forward, as serene as a child in the arms of its mother. I do not know why certain souls want to see their progress, how they are practicing the virtues, what benefit they have received from their struggles and victories. What do they gain from this? Only that he who wants to be all in all so that all things may be perfect in him, hides himself from them. But he cannot be the "all in all" as long as the soul sees anything good in itself. God is pleased with our wretchedness and the futility of our efforts to go to him, because if the soul believes, hopes and loves, it obliges him to come to its aid and then he is the one who struggles and conquers. For this reason, Father, I feel happy at seeing my own nothingness. Sometimes the devil tries to worry me with the thought that I do nothing, that all I have is desires. But I confound him by saying to myself: "That is true; I do nothing and I remain immobile in a profound silence, trusting that God will do everything in me and in others. This hope is my fortress, my support, my consolation." I want to bring many souls to the love of Jesus to give saints to the Church so that they may be its glory and support. But I never think that I shall be the one to do this. No; God will do it in me, because I have trusted in him and have believed in his love. One who believes, hopes and loves, achieves everything.

Some days ago I had to write to a very troubled soul. I had to tell her some strong truths in order to point out the causes of her suffering and help her to be detached from self. Later I had doubts, thinking that it would have been better to win her with love. But the Lord made me understand that I must be disposed to suffer for the good of souls and to make them suffer when necessary. And this is the way he acts with the souls he loves most. He suffers for them and he suffers even more at having to make them suffer, although he does not cease to make them suffer because he loves them, and this is the most pure and certain love.

Last Friday in community Chapter the Prioress spoke to us and quoted from J. Pastor, saying: "This servant says very well . . . ." Sitting in a corner, I covered my face with my veil. God grant that it may always be covered. In heaven I shall be able to do good without anybody taking notice.

The little gift we sent you for your feast day is not of such great value as you think, because except for the picture, we had everything else here in the house. And as regards the making of it, it was made entirely by your daughter; no one else put a hand to it or knows anything. I did it with great pleasure and as a sign of gratitude for the little books you sent us. As to giving the picture away, you have done well. I also desire nothing. These are things that we must not keep for our hands must always be empty to reach out for the supreme good which is God. He alone is our love and all our love is for him.

Submerged in him, I ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

[4] "This is my rest forever; here I shall dwell, for I have chosen this."

Salamanca
August 29, 1927

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he be with you always, resting in your nothingness and working in it the marvels of love he desires to work in those who trust in him alone. Be assured that he will never ask the impossible of you. The more he asks of you beyond your capacity, the more he obliges himself to effect it in his own marvelous ways. So the more you trust in him and believe in love, the more you will glorify him and the more souls you will win for him.

I was greatly pleased to see that you are prompted to hope in the Lord in the measure that you realize your own smallness and impotence. Continue in this way and God's plans for your soul will be realized and you will rejoice more and more at being nothing so that Love may be all. Those noble sentiments, which only the Spirit of God can produce, encourage and console me, and I am very grateful for your delicacy in revealing them to me on the feast of our Holy Father, St. Dominic.

I was greatly pleased at the kindness of the novices to include me in the celebration of their feast day. I was free, so I offered Mass for you. Thus, we were united in God on that day. Please tell this to your novices, whom I look upon as my "granddaughters" because of their relationship to you.

With my affectionate greetings to the Prioress and to all the nuns, I bless them and commend myself to their prayers.

Affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
September 7, 1927

Dear Father:

This time the delay in receiving your letter was a source of hope for me, because from day to day I thought you might visit us. And although you have written, I still wait for you, because it is more than a year since I have seen you. If the Lord wishes, may he give me this consolation. It is only because I seek and find Jesus in your person. But my desires, thanks be to God, do not disturb me; with the same facility that I desire and want something, I can cease to desire and want it if the Lord so disposes. I experience natural inclinations for my own satisfactions, but by the grace of the Lord, these movements are only on the surface of my being. Interiorly, in my inner being, there is always equanimity. I have God, and he alone suffices for me; I need nothing else. God is immutable, and I feel that in the soul where he dwells he establishes that soul in the same immutability. He communicates this quality of his, as we read: *"Non commovebitur in aeternum qui habitat in Jerusalem."* [5]

So it is as the saints say, and there can be no doubt of this, that one is more where he loves than where he is physically; and souls that love God dwell with him in the heavenly Jerusalem. Therefore, they share in the immutability of God. But where is Jerusalem? Wherever God is, because Jerusalem is the place of his dwelling, and God is in the soul that loves him, as a glorious king on his throne. There is where the soul finds its Jerusalem and where God communicates himself and his eternal attributes to the soul. And what a difference, Father, between this interior spiritual kingdom and that of the passing kingdom of our material world. In the world everything is temporary, it changes and passes away. Today we seek eagerly the object of our love, but tomorrow we are bored with it and reject it. So it is with everything material. How foolish are the souls who spend their life this way, running here and there without ever being satisfied or ever finding rest and peace. And to think that they have within themselves the source that is capable of filling the emptiness of their souls. When I consider this, I cannot help but enclose myself even more in the interior dwelling, to protect myself from the danger of

[5] "He who dwells in Jerusalem shall not be moved for all eternity."

falling into the deceptions and foolishness of which so many poor souls are the victims. There, in the peace and silence of love, I rejoice in repeating to my God the *"Domine, bonum est nos hic esse,"* [6] and he, in turn, seems to say the same thing to me. Then there is no sadness, for it seems that all the sufferings and fears of this exile are dissipated. What can afflict these souls or who can do them any harm? No one, because they are protected by God in his tabernacle. There, with my ears closed to all the noise of the world, and with my eyes closed in order not to see anything material, I say to the Lord: "O, Love, you are the eternal truth. Only in you does one live; apart from you everything is death, falsehood, lies. Cover me with your truth and free me from all error so that I may become transformed into you." Then the Spirit of Love comes into the soul like an overwhelming force to effect this transformation. And in making himself felt, he seems to say: "I am he who has the power and strength to plunge souls into the light and truth of God and make them one with him." And so it is necessary always to conclude by saying: "Long live Love!" and to repeat without ceasing: "God is Love! Long live the God of Love!"

But it is not only interiorly but also exteriorly that I am pursued, penetrated and completely surrounded. When I sleep I sometimes dream that I love or am speaking of Love or that I die of love. My nourishment consists almost entirely of milk and fruit and when I take it, it seems that the Lord is saying to me: "I am the one who gives you to eat and I prepare the food, for these two things are not made by the hand of man, but are taken as God made them." And I say: "The only thing lacking, Lord, is that you put them in my mouth so that I can also call you my tender mother." And I think that sometimes he does this, because sometimes I feel incapacitated, and if he did not take my hand and raise it to my mouth, I do not know if I would be able to eat.

Thank you, Father, for the news, the advice and the observations in your letter. May the holy Virgin, our sweet Mother, reward you for everything and make you experience the tenderness of her love.

Prostrate at your feet, I ask your holy blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
September 24, 1927

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

I also had hoped that there would be an occasion to make a visit as in other years, but I had to resign myself, because when our Lord did not dispose it, it was a sign that he wanted to do by himself or by better means the good that we ourselves intended. I was greatly pleased to see that your dispositions are in complete conformity with the divine will. In this way you will always enjoy the peace of God and the joy that no one can take from you; and he will reign more and more in your heart and be your consolation, your light, and even your sweet tutor, who will caress you and serve you with the tenderness of a mother.

But although all this is a consolation to me, I fear that if at times you let yourself be led exclusively by that which attracts you, it may prevent you from taking what is necessary for you. And so when you feel the need, because you are losing strength, you would do well to take what the Prioress offers you, if you see that this does you no harm. If it is the Lord who prevents this, he will know how to supply in a better way. But it is always well that you give me a clear account of this.

I shall also be happy to know how you were able to distribute so many offprints of the articles by Pastor. I am also receiving requests, though not in such great numbers, and the Carmelites of Valladolid tell me that they are reading the articles with great satisfaction. I am happy about this. I would also like to know how you are proceeding with the article on the joys of love. As long as the Lord gives you light, keep writing. As far as my coming to see you,

[6] "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

God will provide the occasion when it suits him. If the Lord should send me sickness, I would advise you.

Yesterday we finished retreat. I don't know how I made it, because although I had strong desires for God, I remained with those alone and scarcely succeeded in making any resolutions. Pray that the conference I shall give in Segovia on the feast of St. John of the Cross will provide light and make truth triumph for the good of all.

I bless all of you.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

Deusto
October 13, 1927

Dear Father:

I would like to speak to you about my great wretchedness but Jesus wants me to speak of his mercy in pardoning me, of his ever increasing goodness to me without my meriting it. It seems that he is pleased to see me fall because of his pleasure at hearing me cry out with greater force that I love him, that he should come to raise me up and cure my wounds with the kisses of his love. I also tell him that I am content at finding myself on the ground in order to await his goodness and invoke and glorify his merciful love. If I were to practice virtue and do great deeds, I would glorify his power and strength in me, but everyone knows and readily believes that God is strong and all-powerful. What is difficult for many souls is to believe in his mercy. What joy it will be for me in heaven to continue to make this truth known to men. May they all say of me as of Magdalen that her sins and wretchedness are great, but great also is her love. This, Father, is the greatness that I desire most intensely. I want nothing else but the greatness of love. I want this greatness, not to rejoice in love, for I should be disposed to renounce that, but because when love is great it has the power of communicating itself, and I want to continue to inflame other souls with this divine fire. I think of doing nothing else on earth but to grow in love, since only in proportion to this shall I be able in heaven to increase it in souls.

To achieve sanctity or perfection seems not to interest me now; I forget myself even to the point of seeking that which is more perfect in order to fulfill my vow. But the Lord reassures me by saying that greater perfection is always found in greater love. So I am content with loving and being loved by my God. No other way is open to me, and if I do not proceed along this path, I would undoubtedly remain forever buried in my imperfections — and I commit so many! Here is an example.

One day the Prioress asked me to send the novices to work in the garden, and I answered that they did not have time for this. But that was not the reason. It was because I do not like them to be with the professed nuns, especially when I cannot be with them. Immediately I heard the voice of the Lord correcting me: "It is to me that you have answered in this way. Can I not dispose of the novices? Are they yours or are they mine?" I repented at once but did not become depressed. I spent the afternoon making acts of love and trust. Now I let the novices go and I myself have accompanied them.

I could tell you other things similar to this but I omit them in order to obey your command to give you an account of my food and my physical condition. Even before you commanded it, I was thinking of telling you about it, but I did not do so because I was awaiting your visit. Also, I seem to be a mystery in this regard. I do not understand myself or know what to say. Sometimes I pass hours and days in which I feel sick with nausea, a heavy feeling in the stomach and exhaustion throughout the body. But when I feel this way, I recover quickly and feel better than before. For that reason I pay no attention to my sicknesses but silently offer them to the Lord, in union with the sufferings of his Passion. For although I am not inclined to ask for suffering, when he sends it I am happy because then there is something in my love which is

similar to his. At present I am eating a little more because I see that it does not do me any harm. Father, this is all that I can tell you at present. You will see for yourself when you come.

The Lord always pursues me with his strong and gentle love and gives my soul a nourishment superior to that of physical food. I believe that it matters little to him what I eat, although when I have taken the ordinary amount, he seems to say: "That is enough," and I can take no more. Unless you command otherwise, I shall continue this way, peacefully bearing the weight of this wretched body.

You asked me how I arranged to distribute so many off-prints of the articles by J. Pastor. I believe that the Lord wants to give me this consolation, for I do very little. I scarcely ever speak of them.

I ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist
Dominican Passionist

Salamanca
November 8, 1927

Dearest daughter in the merciful love of our sweet Savior:

I found your letter on my return from Segovia, where I was greatly consoled to witness the triumph of divine Love in drawing souls to himself. I see in your letter the hidden and delicate things which the Lord is effecting in your soul; and it not only consoles me to see that he knows how to draw such good from your faults and weaknesses by making them motives for love, but it also encourages me to hope that in the end the same thing will happen with my poor soul, which abounds in wretchedness. If this is offered with humility and repentance, we can best become the objects of the delicate tenderness of his heart, filled with merciful love.

For that reason, the devotion to Merciful Love [7] appeals to me more and more, and I hope that it also appeals more and more to all of you, as you realize its efficacy for yourselves and for others. Meanwhile, each one will do well to follow her own devotion because our Lord speaks to each soul the hidden word that is best suited to it. Other devotions, however good they may be, do not make an impression until the moment that the Lord speaks to them.

For your part, follow your way in all tranquillity, "without any other light or guide but the one that burns in your heart," because love will tell you whatever you need to know and will teach you better than anybody else what is true perfection in everything, even in the matter of eating and drinking, taking only what is necessary and even proposing to go beyond that, for the very reason that now your soul tends to the contrary. And so try to please the Prioress by taking whatever you can without harm to yourself or until you know clearly from the inner voice, "That is enough." In that case, you may reply to the Prioress, if she insists, that to take more food would do you harm, that you already know this from experience and there is no danger of becoming ill.

With my affectionate greetings to all and in particular to the Prioress and Mother Pauline, I bless all of you and commend myself to your prayers.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero O.P.

Deusto
November 30, 1927

Dear Father:

I waited and waited for your letter and at last it arrived, with the news of the consolation which Merciful Love granted to you in Segovia. How happy I

[7] "Father Arintero worked very assiduously to propagate devotion to Jesus under the title of Merciful Love. Although it originated from an anonymous manuscript which Father Arintero received from France, the devotion was most widespread in Spanish-speaking countries.

am! The triumphs of love are also my triumphs, just as your consolations, Father, are also mine. And in order that what is mine may also be yours, I am going to tell you what that infinitely Merciful Love does with this unfaithful servant, who offends him more each day, and is more and more unworthy of the tenderness of his love. This is the pure truth; believe it, Father. If you had any idea of what I really am, you would abandon me at once, although you could not do so, because the Beloved would not permit it. He never wearies and he will not let his instruments become weary when he wants to make use of them.

If it were not for the knowledge that the Lord gives me, I would not speak or write or communicate with anyone, so that they would not approach me. How gladly I would hide myself in a place where I would not be seen or heard (to be understood spiritually), in order to weep there for my sins but much more in order to love; to be alone with him whom I love and to tell him that I trust only in him, because only his love can save me. When my soul is in this state, I think of that divine pearl of infinite value — Jesus, wounded, bleeding, crowned with thorns, and dying for love of me. Then he seems to say to me: "I am your wealth, your heritage; my merits are yours and my Mother is yours in order to place great treasures within reach of your weakness and smallness." Then my heart swells and I am happy. What could be lacking to a soul that possesses Jesus and Mary?

This is what I say to the enemy when he tries to make me lose confidence because of my lack of virtue or because all that I have done has been very imperfect and unworthy of God. Sometimes it seems that he says to me: "Vain are your hopes, and one day you will find yourself without anything and without time." I suffer greatly in these struggles, Father, because sometimes I cannot distinguish if they are from the enemy or from God. Then the Passion of Jesus is my only consolation. So much blood shed for me, so many tears of Mary, and I cast myself on them and call upon love.

The devil has no power over souls that are hidden in love. This eternal enemy of love can gain no foothold where love dwells. The evil one can never love; he is everlasting hatred, the eternal opposition to love. Therefore he persecutes us because we are able to love.

If men only knew the power of love, which they often appreciate so little — the power of being able to love, to live hidden in love, to be sustained and defended by love, to grow in love at every instant. This, Father, in spite of the imperfections of all my works, gives me the courage to labor so that others will make up for my deficiencies in my passage through this life, though I believe that no one can make up for them. My longings to love God are infinite, and only God can fill my emptiness with his infinite love. Without him nothing suffices for me, everything is too little, too small for me in time and in eternity. I need all his love in order to love him as I ought. I hope that he will give it to me, and I do not doubt that he will. Meanwhile, I see myself as a person too weak to realize any physical or moral action, because I see only an abyss of darkness. Suspended there, I understand — without knowing how — that there still remains my free will to see, to hear, to work naturally, or to remain in that abyss without knowing what will become of me. That is the way it is with my soul. It makes a choice, and yet the very choosing does not seem to be an act of my own soul but of another. It chooses to remain there, enveloped in darkness. It is free, but at the same time it cannot leave that state or wish for anything else. Tell me, Father, what is this? I am there like a fool, with my eyes closed. I am neither asleep nor awake.

Then on reading Psalm 30, I found various verses that explained this state and I was much consoled. What a source of light is Sacred Scripture, and how rich we are in possessing it. Who will not be inflamed with the love of God on seeing the intimacy granted to those who hope in the Lord?

But what am I? Until God has absorbed my whole life and I am completely transformed in him, everything that I do is insignificant. My works will always be imperfect. In spite of this, he is content, he urges me, not letting me rest,

repeating at every instant: "Follow the name that I have given you; be an apostle of my love." And as if confirmed in this vocation, these days I have had to write a great deal in order to help and console various souls.

I feel much distaste for writing, although this passes when I realize that I thereby help other souls to love God. He seems to support me and assure the good results of everything that I do for that purpose, so that nothing will be ineffective but everything will contribute to the increase of his love in souls. But I ask ever more, namely, that whatever I do should always continue to do good, to produce love, until the end of the world. And I seem to hear the words: "Love is a fire that spreads; it burns whatever it encounters, and nothing can put it out." How blessed it is to be inflamed by this fire which destroys everything, which nothing can resist. Love is the divine power, the eternity of God beginning in us. All the elements, even the most active, lose their power before love. It dominates everything in heaven and on earth and even has power over God himself, who delights to be conquered by that love which is in us but has its origin and principle in him because it is a participation of his divine being. God and the man that loves him become one thing; better yet, God establishes himself in man in proportion to the intensity with which man loves. And so, if the sacred bond of charity is broken, one is separated from God; but as long as the bond remains, he remains united with God.

Who will help me to make all souls understand the power and excellence of love and how rich is the soul simply by being able to love? If all would appreciate this treasure, there would not be poverty or pain on this earth, because love would change everything into heaven. As a proof of how love is our all and does all, notice this detail. Holy Mass was just beginning and I said to myself: "I want to hear it well, because by one Mass well attended, I am certain that my faults will be pardoned." With this intention I united myself to Jesus through Mary and I practiced other acts to this effect, remaining recollected until the Gospel. But then, until Communion I was distracted without realizing that I was at Mass. On realizing it, I was confounded and exclaimed: "My Jesus, my fervor of wanting to hear Mass well has stopped here." And I perceived in my interior the voice of the Lord saying to me: "You can desire something to be well done, but you cannot effect it. I have to do it in you and you must recognize your nothingness and impotency. This is what has happened here. You had the good will, but I have fulfilled it for you." And with this I was consoled.

In this way or by means of his creatures the Lord instructs and consoles me. And so what I am going to tell you would perhaps make you laugh if you did not know that in the hands of him who can raise up sons of Adam from the stones, all things have the same power and serve him equally as instruments to communicate his love. In front of the window in choir there is a very large tree, which shows the length of its years. And I think: "What a long time this tree has been praising God in its mute language. It existed before I did and it will continue existing after I am dead. And why do I, who am immensely more noble, die so much sooner?" And a voice within me answered: "This tree, material as it is, lives outside of God, but your soul, created in his image and likeness, yearns to be united with him and does not let this union be delayed any longer than a man's lifetime." The stem of the leaves that cover the tree is so thin that it cannot hold them upright, so they all lean downwards, and the slightest breeze moves them. The same is true of the soul that loves. Love controls the body by a thin thread that does not prevent it from being moved by the softest breath of the Holy Spirit to sing the praises of love. With the first frost, the leaves change color and begin to fall, until the tree stands naked. Only the praise of a rational being, possessing an immortal soul, can and ought to continue without interruption. Everything else ends with time. As you see, this tree has been for me a great teacher.

God works outside and inside of me. What he does externally I understand, but in the interior of my soul are mysteries that I do not understand, for they are mysteries of love. And so, both my interior and exterior compose a har-

mony of love that God wants to hear from all souls.

How I extend this letter, Father. I am going to end with only two things more, and treat them very briefly. One is whether in the effects that love produces in the soul there is a difference between the "substantial touch" and the "substantial word" of God. It seems useful to know this in order to continue my writings on the joys of love.

The other thing, and the last thing, is whether there is any chance that you can visit us during the Christmas season. We could speak of many things without your having to bother with writing an answer, because it is painful to me to add to your duties that of answering my letters. For this reason I sometimes think it would be better to write you less frequently. But when I feel myself enveloped in my nothingness and misery, a word from you encourages and supports me so much.

Humbly at your feet, I ask your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.
Salamanca

Dearest daughter in Jesus: December 7, 1927

Through the mediation of his most pure Mother, whose great feast we begin to celebrate at Vespers, may he flood you with his graces during this holy season and bring you to a new life that is completely divine. May he thus reward you for the consolation that your letters give me and especially the one of November 30, whose sentiments find an echo in my heart, which ordinarily experiences nothing. And so, my daughter, do not delay in writing to me whenever it occurs to you or when God suggests it, at least once a month, even if I am unable to answer because of many pressing duties. Because of these, I forgot in my last letter to tell you that your suggested topics on the joys of love are most acceptable and you should continue to develop them as you can and as God gives you the light. Do not become discouraged at seeing that it is difficult to express these things, for then God will do everything and there will be less of yourself in the article.

Do not fear anything, because all goes well as long as you let yourself be guided by love, and everything that you hear to the contrary, consider as something from the evil one. Be mindful of the command to live up to your name of "apostle of love" and don't take refuge in likes or dislikes, but in the will of God who is disposing everything gently and will make that apostolate fruitful for many. People are asking for books and articles, so follow your path and realize that this is your work and you cannot abandon it for anyone.

Far from suspending that work, I see more and more that the time is coming when you will have to supply me with a complete description of your life from the time you reached the use of reason, according to the light that God now gives you to see how he was preparing you. If it is better for you, you may write those things of your early years in Italian. But all must be done so far as you are able and as God gives you light and time, and without suspending your work on the articles on love. Since I do not see how I can visit you (unless God disposes some unforeseen event), I am hastening to answer your letter and to encourage you to remain firm in whatever situation God has seen fit to place you, willing to experience the incapacity for anything good so that he alone may be your fortress and your All.

My daughter, continue to try to attract souls to the regions of light and peace. May God shower all of you with his blessings. Be courageous and remain hidden in the interior life of Jesus Love. I bless you.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.
Deusto

Dear Father: December 27, 1927

We are at the end of the year. How happy I am to see how the days of our life run by, because in their passing I see that we are approaching God, and with that my heart is expanded to love him more and to do good for all. How unfortunate they are who do not use the time to achieve this noble end,

which is the one thing for which God gives us time. But so many depart from God and approach their own eternal perdition. How foolish not to take account of this terrible truth, not to realize that each day they are more unhappy and their sufferings increase. On the other hand, by the mercy of God, how happy I am. Neither sufferings nor adversities nor anything else will ever take from me the happiness I possess, because it comes to me from God and God is a good that does not change.

But, Father, it is even sadder that among those blind souls there are some who are consecrated to God. At Vespers of Christmas I observed a sister who came to choir very sad. When she approached me, I said to her: "Away with sadness; it afflicts the King of Peace who comes to bring us joy and peace." She was afflicted by adversity in material things.

Two other religious wrote to tell me that they had no consolation and they couldn't find any relief from their state of suffering and pain. Father, is it possible that some souls are so blind that they want to concentrate on suffering and forget that we were created to enjoy infinite goods and if we wish, we can find motives for happiness in all times and places? I think it is because they make their happiness depend upon external things and they do not realize that all external things that pass cannot make us happy, but neither should they be the cause of our affliction. Only the peace of God, which surpasses all pleasures of the senses, can satisfy the aspirations of our soul.

I don't know what to do. Sometimes I have no desire to answer their letters, because I know that as long as they do not understand this truth, everything is useless. So I remain with a desire to die so that I can penetrate those poor souls with a supernatural power and enkindle the fire of love in them and thus convince them. They speak at great length with confessors and they leave the confessional sadder than before. If, on the other hand, with a generous act of their will, they would silence their reasoning and phantasy to hear the voice of him who dwells in the silence of the soul, how quickly they would find everything.

The consolations that come from the ministers of the Lord, I also desire and obtain, but I never lose my peace of soul when I cannot obtain it, because the God who resides in my soul instructs and consoles me better than anyone else. How happy I feel with him, and because I experience him, I see him and it even seems to me that I hear him. Yes, Father, I hear those words of life which illumine the mind and inflame the heart without passing through the ears.

I am going to tell you now what I did several days ago so that you may correct me if I did wrong. The confessor came for one of the religious and although I also desired to go to confession, I desisted because he had told me that without particular need I should not go to confession. But later I realized that the Lord was not pleased with this, and I told this to him. No, Jesus was not pleased that absolution be denied to souls under the pretext that they do not need it. Even if souls seem pure to the confessor, they are never sufficiently pure before God, who finds stains even in his angels. I explained to him also that when I try to confess, outside the usual time, it is to dispose myself better for intimate union with God. I am never or hardly ever disturbed in conscience because, although I have many sins, I leave all of them to the mercy of the Lord and I confess very few because I don't know what to say. But I always feel the need to have the Blood of Jesus purify my soul, and two or three minutes suffice for this. The ministers of God cannot dispense the sacraments at their whim; they must administer them according to the will of the Master, and he wants them to give grace to souls. In order to open that treasury of infinite riches, he died on a cross. The Blessed Virgin has in her hands the graces to be distributed among men, but what will she say when she sees that some ministers of Jesus shut them off and prevent them from flowing as she desires? It is necessary to think about these things in the light of faith.

I said all of this to the priest, but with humility; and before speaking, I asked permission. Being very humble, he took everything well and agreed with it.

When he comes the next time I shall go to confession. Father, what a thirst I have for divine grace, because grace is love.

If you permit me, I shall write to Father Osende through you. He told me I should write to him and I believe it would be a consolation if he received a letter from me. The advice that he gave me served me well and I am grateful to him.

I have already started what you asked me to do in your previous letter. I am not surprised that you asked me, for I have known for some time that the Lord wants it. May it all be for the glory of love.

May God reward you, Father, for your kindness to us through your advice. The Prioress joins me with Mother Pauline in sending you greetings for Christmas and the New Year. How much glory the Lord will give you for your patience with me.

A priest who was my spiritual director in Italy for some years has died in the odor of sanctity. I think they are going to write his life. All the spiritual fathers that God gave me were saints, and you will be also. Father, are you pleased by this? I beg your blessing.

Mary Magdalen of Jesus in the Eucharist, D.P.

Salamanca
January 19, 1928

Dearest daughter in Jesus:

May he fashion you entirely according to his heart and give you in the New Year a newness of spirit that will be renewed each day.

I was much consoled with your letter and greatly rejoiced at seeing how time passes and how we are approaching him whom we love. It consoles me also to see you so courageous and to tell me that you have always had holy spiritual directors. Maybe, by a miracle of grace, this can be verified in your present director, as you have announced or desired. But it will have to be by a miracle, because I see now everything obscurely and although I have good desires, I do not carry them out.

I desire our Lord, I want to love him and I want many souls to love him; and to this end I want to work by enkindling the flame of his love in as many souls as possible. But I always do it with a cold heart and with very little spirit of sacrifice. In prayer I am like a log, and during the day I am distracted with a thousand foolish things. I am only somewhat devout when I read spiritual letters or correct the proofs for the magazine, for those articles impress me greatly. And God grants that your letters are among the things that touched me most deeply. And so, my daughter, never be afraid of being too lengthy in letters or of being a bother; quite the contrary.

What you said to the confessor in those words and with a respectful tone does not need correction but full approbation. You can be sure that on the next occasion he will dispense grace to you more readily.

In my former letter I forgot to answer your questions about the differences between the substantial touch and the substantial word. I believe that the "touch" is perceived through the gift of wisdom, which makes one experience and taste the things of God; the "word" is experienced through the gift of understanding, although in both cases there is something of God that is communicated.

That is all I can say for today. For all in the community I wish a very happy New Year and in particular for the Prioress and Mother Pauline. I bless all of you and commend myself to your prayers.

Affectionately yours in Christ,
Fr. John G. Arintero, O.P.

This ends the correspondence between Father Arintero and Mother Mary Magdalen. It was interrupted by the death of Father Arintero on February 20, 1928. Father Sabino Lozano, O.P., succeeded Father Arintero as spiritual director for Mother Mary Magdalen until her death on February 10, 1960. Their correspondence will also be published in due course.